Wessex Archaeology

The Prebendal Manor House, Nassington, Northamptonshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation
and Post Excavation Assessment

Ref: 52568.04

September 2003

THE PREBENDAL MANOR HOUSE

NASSINGTON

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Archaeological field evaluation
and
post-excavation assessment

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Summary

Videotext Communications was commissioned by Channel 4 to carry out an archaeological evaluation as part of the Time Team television series in the grounds of the Prebendal Manor House, Nassington, Northamptonshire (centred on National Grid Reference 506200 29600). The manor is mentioned in Saxon chronicles as being the subject of a visit by King Cnut in the 11th century. The existing manor house is a Grade 1 listed building of early 13th-century date, the earliest standing dwelling in Northamptonshire. Previous archaeological work had indicated prehistoric, Roman and Saxon activity in the vicinity.

The present archaeological evaluation comprised a geophysical survey, three hand-dug trenches within the present manor house and two hand-dug test pits and four machine-dug trial trenches located across the site. Geophysical survey was also undertaken on land to the south of the Prebendal Manor House where crop marks, unrelated to the manor complex, were known. The work was undertaken over three days in May 2003.

The results of the evaluation produced more evidence for the use of the site from its prehistoric origins and traced an Iron Age ditch west of its previously known extent. The most significant results provided additional data to the ground plan of the Late Saxon timber hall. It suggested that this structure might be of at least three phases with a post built phase being replaced by a building with wall trenches. Previous excavations had indicated that the wall trench phase of the timber hall was rebuilt at least once, before its replacement by a stone hall in the 13th century. The evaluation also produced the first archaeological evidence for the south wall trench of the timber hall.

Work beyond the area of the Manor House produced evidence for undated ditches, a possible lynchet, a small medieval stone quarry, an 18th century rubbish pit and a post-medieval yard surface. These features relate to the agricultural use of the Manor House in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

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Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned and funded by Videotext Communications. The collaborative role of Jane Baile, the owner of the Prebendal Manor House, Nassington, is acknowledged.

The geophysical survey was undertaken by John Gater with staff from G.S.B. Prospection, and survey by Henry Chapman, University of Hull. Excavation strategy was conducted by Gary Ancell; site recording was co-ordinated by Phil Harding, assisted by Steve Thompson of Wessex Archaeology. Excavation was undertaken by Time Team's retained excavators with help from Dr Martin Tingle and members of Northants Archaeological Unit. The archive was collated and all post excavation analysis and assessment undertaken by Wessex Archaeology including management (Roland Smith), report (Phil Harding), finds (Lorraine Mepham), animal bone (Stephanie Knight), plant remains (Chris Stevens), editing (Bruno Barber) and illustrations (Marie Leverett).

The progress and successful completion of the work also benefited from discussion on site with specialists of Saxon archaeology Paul Blinkhorn (pottery), Dr Jo Story (architectural specialist, University of Leicester), Dr Ken Lawson (historian, St Paul's School, Barnes, London), Jerry McDonnell (metalwork) and Karen Deighton (animal bones).

THE PREBENDAL MANOR HOUSE

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Description of the site

1.1.1 Videotext Communications was commissioned by Channel 4 to carry out an archaeological evaluation as part of the Time Team television series in the grounds of the Prebendal Manor House, Nassington, Northamptonshire (centred on National Grid Reference 506200 29600), approximately five miles west of Peterborough (Figure 1). The Prebendal Manor House is mentioned in Saxon chronicles as being the subject of a visit by King Cnut in the 11th century. The Manor is currently a private house in the ownership of Jane Baile.

1.1.2 The site comprises the extant Grade 1 listed manor house, built in the early 13th century, a 16th-century dovecote, and an 18th-century tithe barn together with associated gardens and fields. The house is the earliest standing dwelling in Northamptonshire.

1.1.3 Geologically it lies on the cusp of areas of Lower Lincolnshire Limestone and Lower Estuarine Series of the Inferior Oolite Series (BGS Sheet 157 – Stamford). It is one kilometre west of the River Nene.

1.2 Previous Archaeological Work

1.2.1 A Saxon cemetery was discovered in 1942 during gravel extraction on the west bank of the River Nene (Leeds and Atkinson 1944). The cemetery lay approximately 800 m south-east of Nassington, near the area known as Swan's Nest. No more than a rescue excavation was possible, however a total of 63 skeletons was recovered.

1.2.2 Archaeological work at the Prebendal Manor House began in 1984 when the owner, Jane Baile, carried out investigations with the help of local archaeologists Pat Foster and Jill Johnstone in and around the house. Occupation could be identified from the Iron Age, when two ditches were traced from the front of the house and beneath the 13th century hall. Roman

pottery, most likely of a manuring scatter was also found indicating that the fields of a Roman farmstead also occupied the site.

1.2.3 The excavations in the interior of the stone hall have established an unbroken sequence of structures on the site dating from the Saxon period (Foster, Johnstone and Baile 1989). The earliest Saxon occupation related to a series of timber post buildings dated to AD 850–950. Most of these post-holes formed no coherent pattern; however they preceded the construction of a large Late Saxon timber hall, possibly of two phases, using both large post pits and posts set in continuous slots.

1.2.4 The present 13th century stone hall lies almost precisely above the post pits and slots of the Late Saxon timber hall. The shallow foundations of a timber annexe to the Saxon hall extended beyond the present stone building to the north, in the area of the former solar of the stone building, now demolished.

1.2.5 The Late Saxon timber hall comprised approximately three bays, each 2.7 m long, and 6.5 m wide with an aisle on the west side. The west wall was constructed on a sill beam with the aisle posts set in from this west wall. The east wall appeared to have been constructed of vertical posts set in a foundation trench, probably with wattle panel infill. This wall was of two phases.

1.2.6 Finds from the Saxon period included a bone comb, a chess piece, a large pottery assemblage, and iron slag.

2 METHODS

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A project design for the work was compiled and provided by Videotext Communications (Videotext Communications 2003), itemising the aims and methods of the project. Full details of the circumstances and methods are contained in this document, which is retained in archive, but is summarised here.

2.2 Aims and objectives

2.2.1 The project provided an opportunity to investigate the remaining unexcavated areas within the 13th-century building, and to complete the plan of the Late Saxon timber hall. The results would:

- help to clarify the interpretation of the building as an aisled hall,
- locate additional post pits of the aisle and slots of the exterior wall and allow any evidence of construction methods to be recorded,
- test the possibility that the hall extended westwards outside the wall line of the present stone hall, and
- lead to a better understanding of the development of the main hall during the Saxon period and if possible to plot its size and appearance.

2.2.2 It was also proposed to undertake a comprehensive geophysical survey of the land around the hall. It was hoped that the results would:

- locate any enclosure (probably a ditch) around the complex, and
- provide targets for trenches to evaluate the survival of deposits with evidence for any ancillary outbuildings (eg craft workshops or smithies, kitchens, separate sleeping chambers) around the late Saxon manor complex.

2.2.3 If such features could be identified, they might potentially contain well-preserved stratified deposits, with evidence for economic, industrial or agricultural processes that took place within the manor.

2.2.4 Additionally it was hoped that the combined archaeological fieldwork might potentially:

- establish the size of the complex,
- identify further medieval remains in the surrounding area and their relationship to the manor, and
- place the site in its wider landscape context.

2.3 Methods statement

2.3.1 The evaluation was conducted using a combination of topographic and geophysical survey (principally ground penetrating radar), and targeted excavation. Trenches in the hall were excavated by hand, while those outside

were opened using a mechanical excavator following the removal and storage of the turf.

2.3.2 Four machine-excavated trenches were dug after consultation with the on-site director, Gary Ancell and associated specialists. The precise location of individual trenches was made to answer specific aims and objectives of the project design (see Section 2.2), informed by the results of the geophysical survey (see 3.2). Two other test pits were opened, but were subsequently abandoned due to the presence of modern disturbance.

2.3.3 The machined trenches were excavated using a wheeled JCB mechanical digger and back-hoe, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All machine work was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision and ceased at the identification of significant archaeological deposits, or where natural bedrock was encountered first. When machine excavation ceased, all trenches were cleaned by hand and archaeological excavation commenced.

2.3.4 A sufficient sample of all deposits was examined to allow the resolution of the principal research questions as outlined above (Section 2.2).

2.4 On-site recording

2.4.1 A unique-number site code was agreed with the owner and the county Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) to be compatible with the archive of previous excavations on the site. The prefix 'Nass' was used to identify the site, with individual suffixes relating to existing areas within the house and grounds. Excavations within the hall were coded 'Nass. HE 03', trenches in the screen passage 'Nass. SP 03', work in the lawn behind the manor 'Nass. Area 6 03' and evaluations in the field beyond the farm buildings 'Nass Area 8 03'.

2.4.2 All trenches within these areas were located using a Trimble Real Time Differential GPS survey system. Archaeological contexts and features were recorded using the standard Wessex Archaeology pro-forma context record sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. All archaeological deposits were planned at a scale of 1:20 and sections drawn at 1:10. The heights above Ordnance Datum (OD) of all principal strata and features were indicated on appropriate plans and sections. A photographic record of the investigations and individual excavated features was prepared for deposition with the archive.

2.4.3 The project was carried out between 7th and 9th May, 2003.

2.4.4 On completion, all trenches were reinstated using the excavated spoil from the trenches. The turf was re-laid over the external trenches. Internal floors were reinstated by appropriate craftsmen. All artefacts were transported to the offices of Wessex Archaeology for processing and assessment.

2.4.5 On completion of this report, the project archive will be returned to the site owners, to be curated along with the records of previous archaeological investigations on the site. The contents of the archive of this evaluation are listed in (Appendix 1).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This report contains a description of the results of excavations undertaken by Time Team at the Prebendal Manor House, Nassington. It does not attempt to offer a detailed interpretation of occupation on the site or of the Late Saxon timber aisled hall(s). These topics will be dealt with in the final site report, which will be compiled by a team lead by Mrs J. Baile, from the results of this and all previous seasons' work.

3.1.2 Details of individual excavated contexts and features, a full geophysical report (GSB 2003) and results of artefact and environmental sample analysis are retained in archive.

3.2 Geophysical survey

3.2.1 Resistance and gradiometer surveys were conducted in five blocks across the lawn and garden around the manor and in the field beyond (Figure 5). Radar was used in two areas on the lawn to the west of the manor. A separate area of 1.12 ha was surveyed with magnetometers in an arable field to the south.

3.2.2 The relatively flat well maintained lawn and field around the manor ensured that conditions were generally good for survey. A number of anomalies were identified in the magnetic and resistance surveys, however the shallow depth of topsoil complicated the interpretation of the radar.

3.2.3 The resistance survey of the lawn immediately west of the manor (Area 1) detected a large area of resistance, which was thought to be a yard surface, however trenches 3 and 5 indicated that it was more likely to be the natural bedrock, which lay beneath a very shallow topsoil. The survey also detected a pit and drain, which were excavated in trench 5 and a probable modern well.

3.2.4 A similar survey immediately north of the manor (Area 2) detected areas of high resistance that were attributed to the construction of a terrace feature or to areas of cobbled yard.

3.2.5 Geophysics within the field (Area 3) produced some correlation between the results of the resistance and magnetic surveys that were of potential archaeological origin. Excavation across a feature to the south in trench 7 indicated that the high resistance was probably caused by the up-cast from the construction of the fishponds. Additional anomalies were thought to be modern including two magnetic anomalies examined in test pits 6 and 6A.

3.2.6 Survey to the south of the manor (Area 4) also produced no conclusive results. Areas of high resistance and magnetic disturbance that may be archaeological could equally be attributed to yard surfaces, garden features or of geological origin.

3.2.7 The magnetic survey in the arable field south of the manor (Area 5) produced a series of anomalies, some quite weak, that correlated with a network of

enclosures plotted from aerial photographs. The survey was able to provide additional detail, including the identification of a large pit like anomaly.

3.2.8 The radar survey across two areas south west of the manor produced a number of responses. Some of these were linear, however it was difficult to interpret individual features with any certainty. There was little to define the exact nature of these features or determine whether they were archaeological or merely natural deposits.

3.3 Archaeological evaluation

3.3.1 Archaeological deposits in the house were exposed following the removal of the present floors of the manor. The concrete floor in Trench 1 was broken up using a pneumatic drill. Two small areas of the tiled floor in the screen passage were lifted to allow excavation of the underlying deposits (Trenches 2 and 4). Archaeological features in three trenches in the lawn to the rear of the hall (Trenches 3, 5 and 8) were overlain by a thin light grey brown silty topsoil 0.15m thick. A thicker layer of topsoil, 0.57m thick, was present in the field beyond the yard (Trenches 6, 6A and 7) as a result of ploughsoil accumulation. Most features in trenches outside the hall and many of those examined within it were filled with yellow brown silty clay derived from the parent Oolitic Limestone.

Trench 1

3.3.2 This trench measured 4.20m long and 2m wide and was located over the north west corner of the Late Saxon timber hall (Figures 2A and 3). The trench was designed to complete the plan of the building in that area and locate additional post pits of the 'aisled' building.

3.3.3 The Iron Age ditch (137) identified in an earlier phase of work at the manor, which terminated approximately 4m east of the Time Team trench, ran across the centre of the trench from north-east to south-west. The feature was not excavated, but measured 0.80m across and was filled with stiff grey clay. It was also traced to the west in Trench 3 as ditch (311) (see below, 3.3.14).

3.3.4 A post pit (113), aligned with the previously excavated post pits of the Late Saxon 'aisled' hall (Figure 3), was located in the north of the trench. This sub-circular feature measured approximately 0.95m north-south and 0.75m east-west and was located approximately 2m north of post pit (119) (excavated as feature 117 in 1986). It was filled (Figure 4) with limestone rich yellow-brown silty clay (116) at the base, with overlying dark brown silty clay (112). Poorly developed horizontal tip-lines were visible in the upper fill, which probably resulted from deliberate backfilling of the post pit following the demolition of the hall.

3.3.5 The foundation slot of the west wall of the timber hall (115), (121), which was known from previous excavations, was traced to its terminus, 0.50m from the north wall of the present hall and aligned with the butt end of the slot forming the east wall. It averaged 0.40m wide and 0.30m deep. The eastern edge was filled with grey brown silty clay (114), which may mark the

positions of former robbed posts, and with limestone rich grey silty clay packing (117) on the west. The foundation slot was broken by a gap, 0.45m across, 2.90m south of its terminus.

3.3.6 A pit and scatter of post-holes, some of which were intercutting, were present across the excavation area (Figure 4). Pit (111) was a flat-based feature, 0.29m deep, which projected from the east edge of the trench. It measured approximately 0.75m north-south and 0.55m east-west and was sealed by a 13th-century clay floor surface (110). Post-holes (123), (141), (103) and (105) were well cut, ranging from 0.30-0.40m deep, while post-holes (125), (127) (129), and (135) averaged only 0.18m in depth. Similar distributions have been found in previous excavations although none have yet been shown to form coherent patterns.

3.3.7 Post-holes (127) and (129) stratigraphically post-dated the Iron Age ditch (137). A few of the post-hole features may represent either internal divisions within the Late Saxon hall, or structures of earlier date or activity related to construction.

3.3.8 Post-holes (103), (105), and (135) were cut through Late Saxon post pits or foundation slots, but none were precisely dated. It is possible that they relate to activity pre-dating the construction of the present hall, although post-holes (103) and (105) are more likely to have been dug to support scaffolding during the construction of the present building. Post-hole (133) contained a fragment of painted wall plaster. It was not possible to establish the stratigraphic relationship between post holes (133) and (141) and between these features and slot (115).

3.3.9 Most of the archaeological deposits, particularly floor surfaces, of the existing hall, have been removed by subsequent alterations to the building. However fragments of a clay floor (107), (108) and (110), believed to be of 13th-century date, were observed. There was also a deposit of fine yellow sand, which is likely to have been associated with the extensive modifications to the hall undertaken in the 17th century.

Trench 2

3.3.10 This trench, which measured 2m x 2m, was dug through the tiled floor at the west end of the screen passage of the standing building (Figures. 2A and 3). Apart from a number of water/heating pipes that ran round the edge of the trench following the line of the main walls, the tiled floor lay on trampled material, which covered bedrock into which a number of archaeological features had been cut.

3.3.11 The principal features in this trench related to the Late Saxon timber hall. A post pit (210), aligned with the other post pits of the suggested aisled hall, was revealed at the south end of the trench. This sub-circular post pit measured approximately 1m in diameter and was 0.55m deep, with steep sides and a flat base. It was filled (Figure 4) with dark grey brown silty clay (211) and included sherds of Late Saxon pottery. It was cut on the south edge by a shallow slot (218), 0.48m wide and 0.17m deep with steep sides and irregular flat base that was filled with orange grey silt sand (217) and was

aligned east-west. This feature terminated immediately east of a slot (216) of similar dimensions, which forms the west foundation trench of the Late Saxon hall, which was exposed in Time Team's Trench 1 and in previous excavations. This suggests that slot (218) was the foundation trench for the southern wall of the hall, the first archaeological evidence for the southern extent of the building. In addition, as slot (218) cuts post pit (210), it suggests that the original building was not aisled, but was a post pit structure, replaced by a trench built hall.

3.3.12 A pit and two miscellaneous undated post-holes were also recorded in the trench. Pit (208) measured 0.80m north-south and 0.25m deep, and was exposed in the east edge of the trench. Post-hole (212), which extended from the south edge of the trench, measured 0.30m deep and cut through both slot (218) and post pit (210). Post-hole (220), which was only 0.20m deep, was similarly later than foundation slot (216).

Trench 3

3.3.13 A trench (Figure 2A) 6.6m north-south and 4m east-west was dug 2 m west of the present stone hall.

3.3.14 The trench revealed a continuation of the Iron Age ditch seen in Trench 1 (see above 3.3.3). The ditch (311) measured 0.70m wide and 0.17m deep with steeply sloping sides and a slightly rounded base. The ditch (Figure 4) was filled with light grey brown silty loam (312). Two undated post-holes were also recorded; one (305) measured approximately 0.8m in diameter with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. The other (309) was less well cut and measured 0.20m in diameter and was only 0.07 m deep.

3.3.15 Two modern service trenches (307, 313) ran across the south-east corner of the excavation.

Trench 4 (Area SP 03)

3.3.16 This trench (Figures 2A and 3) measured 1.90m east-west and 1.20m north-south and was dug at the east end of the screen passage below the tiled floor, which overlay a make-up layer similar to that recorded at the west end of the passage.

3.3.17 Archaeological features included a continuation of the eastern wall foundation slot (406) of the Late Saxon hall (Figure 4). It measured 0.64m wide and was 0.36m deep with steep sides and a slightly rounded base. The primary fill (409) comprised a thin layer of dark grey silty clay, 0.09m thick, which contained fragments of bone, charcoal and slag. A band of re-deposited limestone packing (408) ran along the east edge, suggesting that as in the western foundation slot (see 3.3.5) the wall timbers had been placed against the inner edge of the foundation trench. This inner edge was filled with dark grey clay (407), which overlay the packing and extended to the surface. The trench did not extend far enough to the south to reveal whether the probable south end of the timber hall (as seen in Trench 2, above 3.3.11) was present.

3.3.18 A shallow sub-circular feature (404), which may have been the base of a post-hole, was also recorded to the east of the foundation slot.

Trench 5

3.3.19 A trench, (Figure 2A) aligned north-south and measuring 9m long and 2m wide, was dug to investigate a strong geophysical anomaly. It was extended northwards towards medieval deposits, including a hearth, which had been identified in previous excavations. The geophysical anomaly proved to be a large sub circular medieval pit (503) (Figure 4), over 2.2m across and 0.60m deep with steep sides and a flat base. The primary fill comprised mid grey silty clay (513), which contained limited quantities of domestic refuse including 14th-century pottery and the complete skeleton of a juvenile cat. This layer was sealed by light grey silt (511) with large quantities of redeposited limestone and roof tile fragments. The pottery was also of 13th to 14th-century date. The limited quantities of refuse suggest that this pit may have been dug as a small scale stone quarry pit during a phase of alteration to the hall or its outbuildings. The pit was cut by a modern drain (514).

3.3.20 An oval refuse pit (509) extended from the north-west corner of the trench. It measured 1.04m deep, with steep sides and a flat base. The basal fill comprised dark brown silt (512) with quantities of animal bone and 18th-century pottery. The overlying material (510) contained a similar range of archaeological material but was lighter in colour and included fragments of natural limestone and brick.

Trench 6 and 6A

3.3.21 Two small test pits, each 2 m long and 1 m wide, were located (Figure 2C) in response to the results of the geophysical survey. Following the removal of turf large amounts of modern metal work and disturbance were noted and excavation ceased.

Trench 7

3.3.22 The geophysical survey in the field to the south west of the main hall revealed a number of responses, which it was thought might relate to metal working. A trench (Figure 2C) was excavated by machine to investigate two anomalies, which were located either side of a low (resistance/magnetic) response, possibly a trackway. The trench initially measured 7 m by 1.5 m, but was enlarged to 7m north-south by 4.3m east-west and extended a further 3m to the south in the south-east corner. The results indicated a series of stratified soil deposits and linear ditches, features thought to be related to agricultural use.

3.3.23 The earliest phase of activity was identified by a feature, which extended from the east section of the trench (Figure 4). This feature (701) was of unknown extent, but was 0.26m deep with steep sides and flat base. It may have been a ditch terminus or a pit. It had silted naturally with a series of silty clays (707), (710) and (706).

3.3.24 An accumulation of plough soil (702), (713), up to 0.60m thick and containing Saxon pottery, overlay this feature. It is unclear whether this deposit represents a natural lynchet formation or an area of inverted

stratigraphy. It was overlain to the south by a bank of orange brown silty clay (712), 0.30m thick, probably up-cast from the construction of the fishponds. A linear feature (704), which measured 1m wide and 0.15m deep was cut into the bank make-up. It had shallow sloping sides and a rounded base. The feature had silted naturally with material (703) from the surrounding plough soil and was thought to have been a drain running from the barn to the north.

3.3.25 A shallow post-hole (710), approximately 0.30m in diameter and 0.23m deep was cut into the plough soil (702). A shallow gully (708), aligned east-west, terminated 1.20m from the east section. It was 0.40m wide and 0.13m deep, with gently sloping sides and a flat base.

3.3.26 The entire sequence was overlain by an accumulation of plough soil (714) 0.57m thick.

Trench 8

3.3.27 A trench (Figure 2B) 4m by 4m was excavated immediately east of the main barn. The results of the excavation were inconclusive. The trench lay within a compacted yard surface (802), up to 0.28m thick, of fragmented limestone and brick, which overlay the natural limestone bedrock. A large, clay filled feature (804), approximately 1.10m across and 0.40m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a rounded base was considered to be a post-hole. However it was not completely excavated or satisfactorily dated in the time available. The only dating evidence was a sherd of Saxon pottery, found in the upper fill. A second small post-hole, (807), 0.20m in diameter and 0.11m deep was found immediately east of the larger one.

4 FINDS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Finds were recovered from seven of the eight trenches excavated; no finds were recovered from the two small test pits (Trench 6 and 6A). A high proportion of the assemblage derived from trenches in the lawn behind the manor (Area 6 03; Trenches 3, 5, 8), with smaller quantities recovered from the hall (HE 03; Trench 1), the cross passage (SP 03; Trenches 2 and 4) and the field beyond the farm buildings (Area 8 03; Trench 7). All finds have been cleaned (with the exception of the metalwork) and have been quantified by material type within each context. Quantified data form the primary finds archive for the site, and these data are summarised by trench in (Table 1).

4.1.2 Subsequent to quantification, all finds have been at least visually scanned in order to gain an overall idea of the range of types present, their condition, and their potential date range. Pottery has been subjected to more formal scanning, including quantification by ware type (details below). Spot dates have been recorded for selected material types as appropriate. All finds data are currently held on an Excel spreadsheet.

4.1.3 This section presents an overview of the finds assemblage, on which is based an assessment of the potential of this assemblage to contribute to an understanding of the site in its local and regional context. The assemblage is largely of Late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval date, with a handful of residual prehistoric (worked flint) and Romano-British material (pottery).

Table 1 Finds totals by material type (number / weight in grammes)

Area Code	HE 03	SP 03		6 03			8 03	
Trench no.	Tr 1	Tr 2	Tr 4	Tr 3	Tr 5	Tr 8	Tr 7	**TOTAL**
Material type								
Pottery	18/50	17/66	6/49	17/111	173/1887	26/304	49/458	**306/2925**
Romano-British	2/6	-	-	-	-	-	4/28	**6/34**
Saxon/Medieval	16/44	17/66	2/5	1/1	44/599	12/132	44/428	**136/1275**
Post-medieval	-	-	4/44	16/110	129/1288	14/172	½	**164/1616**
Ceramic Building Mat.	1/3	-	2/185	2/16	20/2453	-	7/143	**32/2800**
Fired Clay	-	1/164	-	-	-	-	9/42	**10/206**
Plaster	6/131	-	-	-	-	2/44	-	**8/175**
Clay Pipe	-	-	-	-	1/2	2/1	-	**3/3**
Glass	3/8	-	1/1	5/16	11/130	1/1	-	**21/156**
Stone	-	7/5588	5/535	1/708	13/3067	-	1/69	**27/9967**
Worked Flint	-	-	-	-	-	-	2/5	**2/5**
Slag	8/90	9/449	24/1072	2/111	-	1/50	8/86	**52/1858**
Metalwork	-	2	6	3	14	1	6	**32**
Cu alloy	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	**1**
Iron	-	2	6	3	13	1	5	**30**
Lead	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	**1**
Animal Bone	43/61	25/81	15/40	16/69	247/2077	-	174/1709	**520/4037**
Shell	2/7	-	-	-	9/93	-	1/9	**12/109**

4.2 Pottery

4.2.1 The small pottery assemblage includes material of Romano-British, Late Saxon/medieval and post-medieval date. Table 2 gives the breakdown of the assemblage by broad ware group within each trench.

Table 2 Chronological breakdown of pottery assemblage (number / weight in grammes)

Area code	HE 03	SP 03		6 03			8 03	
Trench no. / **Ware group**	Tr 1	Tr 2	Tr 4	Tr 3	Tr 5	Tr 8	Tr 7	**TOTAL**
ROMANO-BRITISH								
Greywares	2/6						4/28	**6/34**
LATE SAXON / MEDIEVAL								
Stamford ware	2/5	8/36			4/43	6/59	25/130	**45/273**
St Neots ware	5/14	4/8	1/2				3/7	**13/31**
Oolitic wares	2/4			1/1	31/421		2/19	**34/441**
Other calcareous	4/6	3/6			8/130	6/73	9/239	**30/454**
Sandy wares	5/19	2/16	1/3		1/5		5/33	**14/76**
POST-MEDIEVAL								
Redwares			2/36	8/96	35/629	1/3		**46/764**
Midland Yellow					7/72			**7/72**
Refined redware				1/1				**1/1**
Stonewares			1/6	1/3	7/68	5/85	1 / 2	**15/164**
White saltglaze					2/47			**2/47**
Creamware					57/243			**57/243**
Bone china			1/2	2/4	4/17			**7/23**
Industrial wares				4/6	17/212	8/84		**29/302**
TOTAL	**18/50**	**17/66**	**6/49**	**17/111**	**173/1887**	**26/304**	**49/458**	**306/2925**

Romano-British

4.2.2 Romano-British material is restricted to six sherds of coarse greyware, probably originating from more than one source, none of which can be dated more closely within the Romano-British period. All sherds occurred residually in later contexts.

Late Saxon/Medieval

4.2.3 The Late Saxon and medieval assemblage (136 sherds) includes a range of ware types, which are likely to represent several different local and regional types. Identification and dating of these sherds, however, is hampered by the lack of diagnostic material, and the relatively poor condition of the sherds, which are in general small and abraded, particularly from Trenches 1 and 2.

4.2.4 Identifiable types include Stamford wares, some glazed (9th to early 13th century), and St Neots-type shelly wares (early 10th to mid 11th century). Other calcareous wares include shelly and oolitic types. The latter were concentrated in Trench 5 (residual in pits (503) and (509)), and almost certainly include some Lyveden-Stanion wares. The shelly wares, most of which came from Trenches 1 and 2, are likely to be largely of Late Saxon

date, although some harder fired examples from Trench 5 are later, and include one jar rim (residual in pit (503)). The remaining sherds are in miscellaneous and non-distinctive sandy wares.

4.2.5 Diagnostic forms are generally confined to later medieval examples - one glazed rim, probably from a Lyveden-Stanion type curfew, one jug rim/handle, partially glazed, also probably Lyveden-Stanion (both from pit (503)), and one jar rim in a shelly coarseware (unstratified in Trench 7). These vessels suggest a date within the range of mid 12th to mid 14th century.

Post-Medieval

4.2.6 Post-medieval wares comprise redwares, almost certainly from several different sources, Midland Yellow ware, stonewares, white salt-glazed stoneware and later industrialised wares (creamware, bone china, refined whitewares).

4.3 Ceramic Building Material

4.3.1 The small group of ceramic building material includes fragments of unfrogged bricks (Trenches 1, 4, 5 and 7), roof tile (unstratified in Trench 3), all of post-medieval date, and two fragments of modern glazed wall tiles (Trench 5). Also present are one fragment of a medieval crested ridge tile, and 11 other glazed fragments in similar fabrics which probably also derive from ridge tiles (pit (503), ditch (704)).

4.3.2 Ten fragments were identified only as fired clay. All are featureless, and could represent degraded fragments of ceramic building material.

4.4 Glass

4.4.1 All of the glass recovered is post-medieval, and includes both vessel and window fragments. One window quarry fragment from Trench 1 (posthole (133)) has a grozed edge.

4.5 Stone

4.5.1 This category includes building material, and one portable object. The latter is an incomplete whetstone in mica schist, from Trench 2 (pit (208)).

4.5.2 The remaining fragments all appear to represent building material, including flat roofing slabs with nail holes in limestone (oolitic and shelly) and sandstone, and blocks. One group of five tile fragments came from pit (503) associated with medieval pottery and ceramic ridge tile.

4.6 Slag

4.6.1 A small quantity of iron smithing slag was recovered, in no instance sufficient to suggest on-site metalworking.

4.7 Metalwork

4.7.1 This category includes objects of iron (nails, sheets fragments), lead (unidentified lump) and copper alloy (sheet fragment). None of these items are closely datable.

4.8 Other Finds

4.8.1 Other finds comprise clay pipe (plain stem fragments), wall plaster (monochrome white, one red-painted fragment from post hole (133), worked flint (one flake and an arrowhead, both from Trench 7), and shell (oyster and mussel).

4.9 Animal Bone

4.9.1 504 fragments of animal bone were located in deposits dated by ceramic associations to the Late Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval periods, from Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7.

Late Saxon

4.9.2 60 fragments of bone were recovered from Saxon features. Of these, half were in fair condition, 26 (43%) in good condition and just 4 (7%) in poor condition. 7% had been gnawed.

4.9.3 45% of the animal bone could be identified (N=27). The most numerous species are domestic fowl, including one male, found only in the timbered hall foundation slot and post pit (Table 3). Several of these bones were probably from one individual and thus bird may be over represented in this period. Excepting horse, the main domesticates are present, and a possible deer bone suggests some use of wild resources. The rodent bone may be intrusive.

Table 3 Species list and percentages (NISP): Saxon. Latin name in italics, common name and/or probable species in normal font

Feature / **Species**	Hall slot	Hall post	Drain	Ploughsoil	**Total**	**% of identified fragments**
Aves (bird)	9	1			**10**	37
Bos (ox)	2	1	2	1	**6**	22
Capra? (deer?)		1			**1**	4
Ovicaprid (sheep/goat)	2	1	2	1	**6**	22
Rodentia (rat?)				1	**1**	4
Sus (pig)			2	1	**3**	11
Unidentified	5	11	8	9	**33**	
Total	**18**	**15**	**14**	**13**	**60**	

4.9.4 10% of bones could be aged (N=6), and 5% could be measured (N=3). 7% of bones had been butchered and 5% had been burnt.

Medieval

4.9.5 Of the 200 bones from this period (Table 4), 11 (6%) were in poor condition, 38 (19%) were in good condition and the majority were in fair condition. Only 2 (1%) had been gnawed.

Table 4 Species list and percentages (NISP): Medieval. Latin name in italics, common name and/or probable species in normal font

Species	Total	% of identified fragments	% of identified fragments (omitting cat skeleton)
Aves (bird)	14	8	34
Bos (ox)	5	3	12
Equus? (horse?)	1	1	2
Felis (cat)	133	77	2
Pisces (fish)	12	7	29
Ovicaprid (sheep/goat)	4	2	10
Sus (pig)	4	2	10
Unidentified	27		
Total	**200**		

4.9.6 Of the 173 identified fragments, 133 were from one immature cat skeleton in a pit. A minimum number of individuals count would probably reduce this proportion to more like that shown in the far right column in Table 4. Even omitting this individual the proportion of identified fragments is relatively high at 60%.

4.9.7 Unusually, the next most common remains were those of bird and fish, followed by roughly equal numbers of ox, sheep/goat and pig. A probable horse bone was recorded from context 705. Most of the bird and fish remains come from one context (132) and may again be the remains of very few individuals. The birds appear to have been domestic varieties, one small and one large.

4.9.8 10% of bones (N=20) could be aged, but only 1 could provide metrical information about the size of individuals. Only 2% were butchered and 3% were burnt.

4.9.9 Finding a cat skeleton in a pit is not unusual for the medieval period, as cats were often skinned. There are no skinning marks visible on this individual, but this does not necessarily mean that skinning had not taken place. However such a young individual would not produce as much fur and there may be some other reason for its inclusion in this deposit, such as disposal after natural death or culling of unwanted animals.

4.9.10 The high proportion of fish and bird bones is unusual. However, species proportions may be unrepresentative due to the small size of the assemblage. Birds and fish are mainly small animals that may be eaten in one meal, leading to the disposal of groups of bones that could over-represent these species. Identification of the species will aid understanding of trade and status by assessing the extent of links with coastal areas (fish) and the selection of bird species for breeding and eating.

Post-Medieval

4.9.11 All the bone in this period (Table 5) was in fair condition, although gnawing was more prevalent than in previous phases of occupation at 14% (N=13).

Table 5 Species list and percentages (NISP): Post-Medieval. Latin name in italics, common name and/or probable species in normal font

Species	Total	% of identified species
Bos (ox)	6	25
Capra (deer)	4	17
Lepus (hare)	2	8
Ovicaprid (sheep/goat)	7	29
Sus (pig)	5	21
Unidentified	72	
Total	**96**	

4.9.12 The proportion of identified fragments is low at 25% (N=24). The species identified include sheep/goat, ox, pig, and (possibly fallow) deer in roughly equal proportions, with a few fragments of hare bone. Both the deer and hare could indicate hunting activity, although the hare was represented only by foot bones, perhaps waste from butchery if the animal was destined to be cooked relatively whole. Hare's feet were considered lucky in the 17th century (mentioned in the Diary of Samuel Pepys: 20th January 1665) and it could be that this was part of a discarded charm.

4.9.13 14% of bones could provide ages of animals, and 6% could give sizes. Butchery marks were found on a large proportion of the bones (22%), and none were burnt. The butchery marks differ markedly from those seen in previous periods, with mainly saws and chops thorough the bone producing regularly sized pieces. A distal deer tibia had been roughly pierced on both anterior and posterior aspects. This type of mark seems too crude to indicate bone working, and perhaps resulted from extraction of marrow which, when heated, becomes liquid and can be extracted through relatively small openings.

Unstratified

4.9.14 148 unstratified bones were recovered from Trenches 1, 3 and 7, of which the majority (N=92) were small unidentified fragments. One fish bone was found in Trench 1 and a sheep/goat bone from Trench 3.

4.9.15 Trench 7 produced the most unstratified bones, 137 fragments. 39% could be identified, including ox, dog, deer, sheep/goat, pig and probable horse. Although the bones are in fair or good condition, the wide date range given by the ceramics suggest that this there is no coherence in this group and no further analysis is recommended.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Four bulk samples of between 200ml and 20 litres were taken from pits and post-holes of a Saxon/Medieval hall. They were processed for the recovery and assessment of charred plant remains and charcoals. The former came from a late Saxon hall. The latter was from a pit within the hall, of possible Late Saxon or medieval date.

5.2 Methodology

5.2.1 The bulk samples were processed by standard flotation methods; the flot retained on a 0.5 mm mesh and the residues fractionated into 5.6 mm, 2 mm and 1 mm fractions and dried. The coarse fractions (>5.6 mm) were sorted, weighed and discarded.

5.2.2 The flots were scanned under a x10 - x30 stereo-binocular microscope and presence of charred remains quantified (Table 6), in order to present data to record the preservation and nature of the charred plant and charcoal remains and assess their potential to address the project and subsidiary aims.

Table 6 Assessment of the charred plant remains and charcoal

							Flot			Residue	
Feature type/ No	Context	Sample	size litres	flot size ml	Grain	Chaff	seeds charred	Charcoal >5.6mm	Other	Charcoal >5.6mm	analysis
Pit 208	209	201	20	30 -	A*	C	C	A*	moll -t		P C
Post pit 210	214	202	15	50 -	A*	C	A	A	moll-t. fish		P C
Pit 111	109	1	1	3 -	-	-	C	-	-		
Posthole 133	132	2	0.2	3 -	-	-	C	-	fish bone		

KEY TO Table 6: A* = 30–50 items, A = ≥10 items, B = 9–5 items, C = <5 items. Moll-t = terrestrial molluscs; Analysis, C = charcoal, P = plant

5.3 Charred plant remains

5.3.1 The sample from pit (208) contained mainly grains of hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare sensu lato*) in an excellent state of preservation. A single rachis fragment was also recovered and could be identified as coming from the six-row variety. A few grains of wheat were also recovered of which two were definitely of the free-threshing variety, for example bread, club or durum wheat (*Triticum aestivum sensu lato*). Almost no weed seeds were present with only a single charred seed of goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.) being recovered. A small fruit stone resembling domestic plum, sloe almond or cherry etc. (*Prunus* sp.) was also recovered.

5.3.2 The sample from the post-pit (210) produced a wider variety of material. The grains were predominately of oats (*Avena* sp.), judging by their size possibly of cultivated variety (*Avena sativa*). Also grains of hulled barley (*Hordeum*

vulgare sensu lato) and free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum sensu lato*). Also present was a couple of grains of 'celtic' or broad bean (*Vicia faba*) and a single cotyledon of pea (*Pisium sativum*) or lentil (*Lens culinaris*). Chaff was generally absent with only a culm node (straw fragment) of cereal or a large grass being recovered.

5.3.3 Seeds of wild species included many common arable weed species such as probable wild oats (*Avena* cf. *factua*), goosefoot (*Chenopdium* sp.), tare/vetch (*Vicia/Lathyrus*), spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*), brome grass (*Bromus* sp.), common couch grass (*Elymus repens*), narrow fruited cornsalad (*Valerianella dentata*), sticking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*), black medick/clover (*Medicago lupilina*), sheeps sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), dock (*Rumex* cf. *crispus*) and petty spurge *Euphorbia peplus*. Such seeds were generally infrequent with each species represented by only one to two seeds except those of vetch/tare where five to ten seeds may have been present.

5.3.4 The sample from the post-hole (133) contained some fragments of wood charcoal, but only a single seed of curled-leafed dock (*Rumex crispus*). That from the pit (111) was highly similar containing a single seed of curled-leafed dock (*Rumex crispus*) and one fish bone.

5.4 Charcoal

5.4.1 Charcoal was noted from the flots of the bulk samples and is recorded in Table 6.

5.5 Potential

5.5.1 The charred plant remains have the potential to provide information about the economic basis of the late Saxon / medieval period at the site and the conditions under which cereals were grown. The sample from pit (208) has some potential as it would seem to represent almost fully cleaned barley with almost no weed seeds, although a more positive identification on the possible fruit pip might reveal something of non-cereal foods. However, this can be gleaned from the assessment without further analysis.

5.5.2 The sample from post pit (210) is of more interest. It has a wide variety of different species considering it has relatively few weed seeds. These also show quite a wide variety of different types of soils under cultivation, sheep's sorrel is indicative of sandier drier soils, spikerush of wetter soils and stinking mayweed of heavy clay soils. The sample also contains several economic plants, oats, barley, free-threshing wheat, beans and possibly pea or lentil.

5.5.3 The remaining two samples, containing as they do only one seed each, have no further potential.

5.5.4 The charcoal can provide some information on the nature of the local woodland, and of timber selected for local use.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1.1 The evaluation produced a number of results, which have added significant data to the archaeological record from the site. The most important contribution has been to undertake excavation of previously unrecorded parts of the Late Saxon timber hall. This has made it possible to reconstruct almost the entire ground plan of the timber hall, including for the first time archaeological evidence for the foundation trench of its south wall. The evaluation also revealed evidence to suggest that the hall, originally thought to be of sill beam construction within which was a line of substantial aisle posts (Foster *et al*., 1989, 555), may have had at least three phases of construction. The evaluation has suggested that the line of aisle posts preceded the construction of the foundation trench for the timber hall. The previous excavations indicated that the foundation trench for the east wall of the hall underwent one phase of rebuilding, before being replaced by a stone hall in the 13th century.

6.1.2 The evaluation has provided stratified artefacts and environmental data that will add to that already recovered from the site, especially with regard to the economy and landscape around the site in the Late Saxon period.

6.1.3 The small finds assemblage is a useful addition to the Late Saxon and medieval material already recovered from the Late Saxon timber hall and succeeding medieval manor. Its potential is limited, however, by the small quantities involved, and the poor condition of some of the material, particularly the pottery from the Late Saxon features. It is recommended that any analysis of the assemblage from this stage of fieldwork is carried out as part of any overall programme of analysis in the future.

6.1.4 The small charred plant assemblages have some potential for further analysis, although much of the basic information can be gleaned from the assessment presented here. Two samples could provide further information about the Saxon economy and activity associated with the hall, which is important in this region and could be selected for further analysis.

6.1.5 This report sets out a description of the results of the evaluation undertaken by Time Team at the Prebendal Manor House, Nassington. It has not attempted to offer a detailed interpretation of occupation on the site or of the Late Saxon timber hall(s). It is proposed that these topics will be dealt with in a final site report, which will be compiled by a team lead by Mrs J. Baile, from the results of this and all previous seasons' work. In accordance with the wishes of the landowner, this report and the accompanying archive, including the finds and environmental materials, will be deposited with Mrs Baile and maintained and curated on site as part of the collection accumulated from previous excavations.

6.1.6 A copy of this evaluation report will also be deposited in due course with the Northamptonshire County Sites and Monuments Record so that the results are available to future researchers.

7 REFERENCES

Foster, P, Johnstone, G and Baile, J 1989 'The Prebendal Manor House at Nassington, Northamptonshire' *Archaeological J.* **146**, 555-8.

Leeds, E.T. and Atkinson, R.J.C. 1944 'An Anglo Saxon Cemetery at Nassington, Northants' *Antiquaries Journal* **24**, 100-28.

Stevens, C, 2003 Palaeo-environmental evidence: Nassington, unpub Wessex Archaeology rep

Videotext Communications, 2003 Proposed archaeological evaluation at Nassington (NGR TL 062960): Project Design, unpub rep

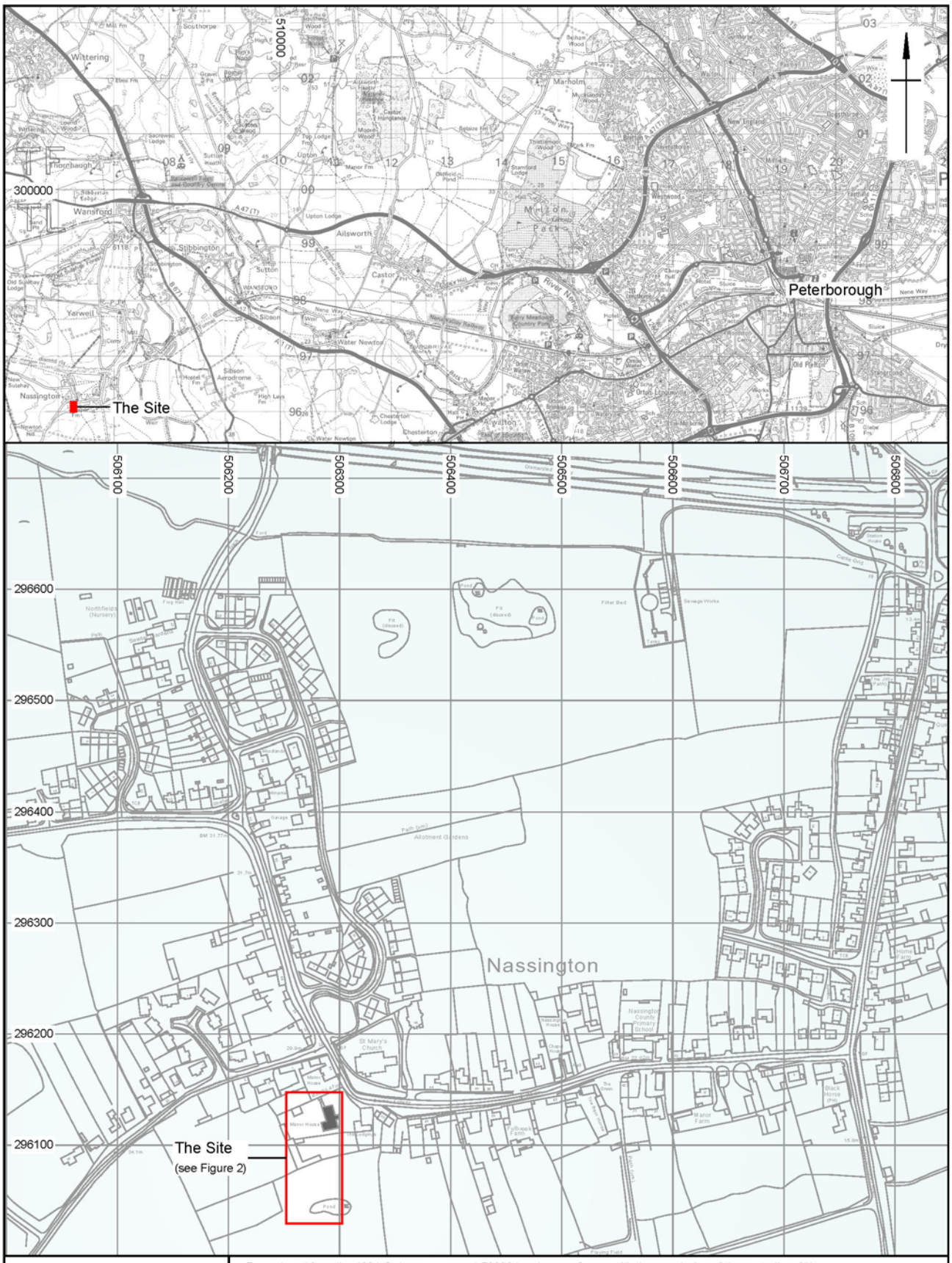
Geophysics of Bradford, 2003 *Nassington Northamptonshire Geophysical Survey* client report 2003/33

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Project archive

The archive, which includes all artefacts, written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken, is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology under the code 52568 (NASS 03). It is intended that, in accordance with the wishes of the landowner, the excavated material and records will eventually be returned to the owner where they will be incorporated with the results of the previous excavations awaiting final publication. The contents of the finds archive is set out in Table 1. The contents of the paper archive is as follows:

No.	Format	Description
9	A4 pages	Project Design
29	A4 pages	Assessment Report
8	A4 pages	Context index sheets
126	A4 pages	Context record sheets
2	A4 pages	Test pit/Trial trench record forms
74	A4 pages	Graphics register sheets
1	A1 page	Drawing sheet
13	A3 pages	Drawing sheets
11	A4 pages	Drawing sheets
6	A4 pages	photographic register sheets
5	A4 pages	sheets of results, showing levels data
6	A4 pages	sheets of GPS data showing trench location, geophysics grid and TBMs
80	35mm	colour slides
	35mm	monochrome photographs and negatives
5	A4 pages	Geophysics Report
8	A4 pages	Environmental report and analysis sheets
2	A4 pages	pot scan results
3	A4 pages	finds by context



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Scale:	1:100000 and 1:5000 at A4	Illustrator:	MCL
Path:	X:\projects\52568\drawing Office\Nassington\Report Figures\Figures.dwg		

Wessex Archaeology

Site location plan

Figure 1

Archaeological features
Services
Sections

Wessex Archaeology

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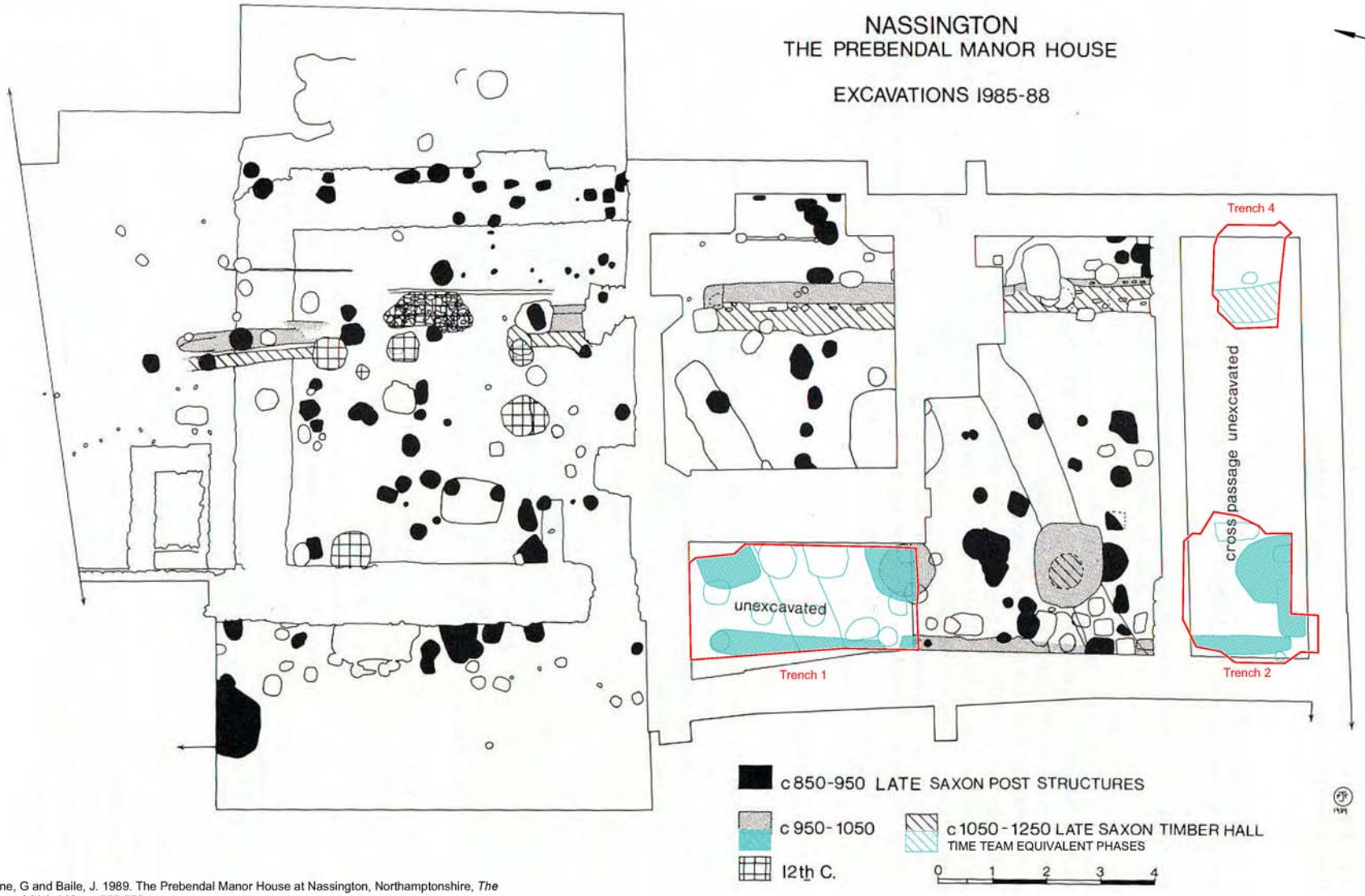
Trench location plan

Figure 2



Foster, P, Johnstone, G and Baile, J. 1989. The Prebendal Manor House at Nassington, Northamptonshire, *The Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 146, pp 555-559

Date:	16/09/03	Revision Number:	
Scale:	1:80 at A3	Illustrator:	MCL
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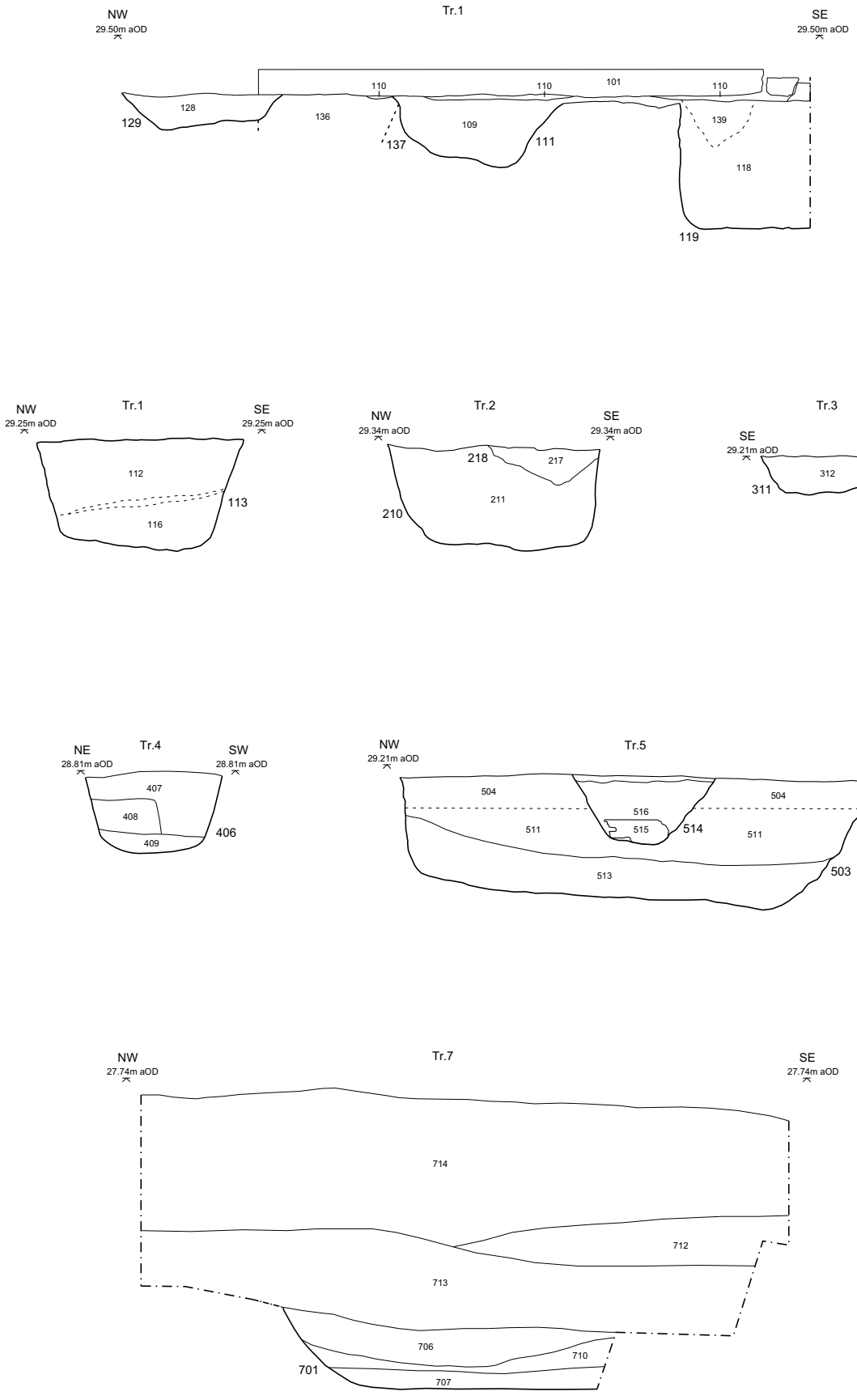
Wessex Archaeology

Overlay of the Time Team trenches with the 1980s excavation plan

Figure 3



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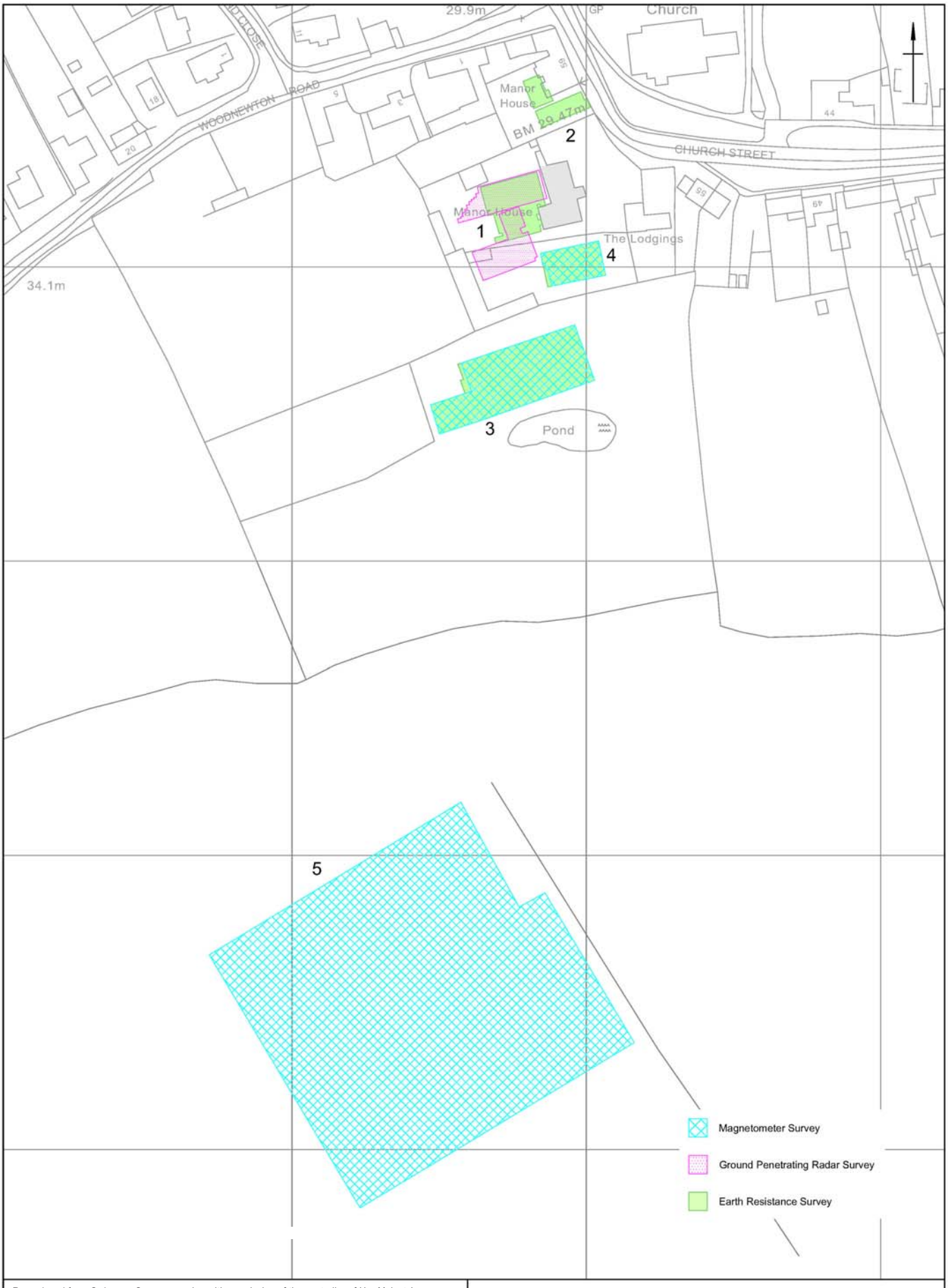
Wessex Archaeology

Selected sections

Figure 4



Geophysical data courtesy of GSB Prospection Ltd

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Wessex Archaeology

Location of geophysical surveys

Figure 5

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