Midsummer Meadow
Northampton Waterside
Northamptonshire
Archaeological Evaluation

for
University of Northampton

CA Project: 660176
CA Report: 13687
January 2014
Nunn Mills
Northampton Waterside
Northamptonshire

Archaeological Evaluation

CA Project: 660176
CA Report: 13687

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9 December 2013

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14 January 2014

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17 January 2014

issue
01

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in December 2013 at Midsummer Meadow, Northampton Waterside, Northamptonshire. Three trenches were excavated.

Evidence of post-medieval/modern ground make-up or levelling, probably undertaken to reclaim or stabilise land adjacent to the River Nene, was identified in all of the excavated trenches. Further modern features comprising a large backfilled pit and a modern service trench were identified in Trenches 1 and 3 respectively.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified during the course of the evaluation.
1. \textbf{INTRODUCTION}

1.1 In December 2013 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for the University of Northampton at Midsummer Meadow, Northampton Waterside, Northamptonshire (centred on NGR: SP 76310 59978; Fig. 1). An outline planning application (ref. N/2013/0912) was submitted to Northampton Borough Council (NBC) in August 2013 for the re-development of a site at Nunn Mills into a new university campus, which will replace the University’s existing campuses to the north of the town centre. An associated new access road, off the A428 Bedford Road, and bridge crossing of the River Nene are proposed to the north of the Nene, within the present Midsummer Meadow recreation area. Further details of the overall development proposals are outlined in the Environmental Statement (Savills 2013). A resolution to grant planning permission was given at the NBC Planning Committee on 17 December 2013.

1.2 Due to the site’s location on the floodplain of the River Nene, which has been the focus for human activity since at least the Mesolithic, and its proximity to the site of the Battle of Northampton, an initial archaeological evaluation of the proposed new access road was requested by Lesley-Ann Mather, Northamptonshire County Council, Archaeological Advisor to NBC. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed \textit{Written Scheme of Investigation} (WSI) produced by CA (2013a) and approved by Lesley-Ann Mather. The fieldwork also followed the \textit{Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation} (IfA 2009), the \textit{Management of Archaeological Projects 2} (English Heritage 1991) and the \textit{Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager’s Guide} (EH 2006). It was monitored by Lesley-Ann Mather, including a site visit on 5 December 2013.

\textbf{The site}

1.3 The site presently being evaluated (the proposed new road access from the A428 Bedford Road through Midsummer Meadow) lies to the north of the proposed main site of the University development, which covers an area of approximately 22.5ha, and is located c. 800m to the south-east of Northampton town centre, on the south bank of the River Nene. The access road evaluation site covers approximately 0.3ha, and is bordered to the north by the A428 Bedford Road, to the west by a surface car park, to the south by the River Nene and to the east by the Midsummer
Meadow Recreation Ground. Situated on the floodplain of the River Nene, the ground is typically flat, with the site lying close to the 58m Ordnance Survey contour.

1.4 The bedrock geology comprises Jurassic rocks of the Whitby Mudstone Formation, overlain by deposits of glaciofluvial and river terrace sand and gravel at the edges of the floodplain, with more recent (Holocene) alluvial deposits extending over most of the site (BGS 2013). Orange grey alluvial clays were identified in all of the excavated trenches.

**Archaeological background**

1.5 The summary below is taken from the Archaeology and Heritage chapter, prepared by Cotswold Archaeology, for the *Environmental Statement* (Savills 2013).

1.6 There are no known prehistoric remains within the site, although a findspot of prehistoric stone tools is recorded to the north-west (HER ref MNN25223) and the alluvium may conceal sites of prehistoric settlement or funerary monuments on gravel islands between braided river channels. Previous geotechnical and archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the site have shown that the alluvium ranges between 1m and 7m in thickness (CA 2013b). Palaeochannels, which may contain archaeologically important palaeoenvironmental remains, may be encountered beneath and within the alluvium.

1.7 During the Late Iron Age and Roman periods the site was peripheral to the main areas of settlement, the nearest Roman town being at Duston, c. 4km to the north-west. Previous investigations indicate that the area was increasingly prone to flooding in the Roman period.

1.8 The town of Northampton has its origins in the early medieval period before the founding of the fortified town or *burh* in the 9th and 10th centuries. The site lies 1km to the south-east of the core of the early town, on land that was increasingly subject to flooding and was probably used as seasonal pasture.

1.9 The medieval period was the peak of importance for the town of Northampton, with the first extant town charter dating from 1189. The site lies to the south-east of the medieval town and the vast majority of the site was probably water meadow used for seasonal grazing, which remained undeveloped throughout the period. A medieval watermill, first recorded in 1403, is known to have stood to the west of the current
evaluation site. A subsequent post-medieval mill complex was later built there, and continued as a working mill until its closure and demolition in the 20th century.

1.10 On 10 July 1460, the Battle of Northampton was fought on farmland to the south of the town, in the vicinity of Delapre Abbey. There is still some uncertainty about the precise location of the battle and it has been suggested that it may have taken place to the south and south-east of the area now occupied by the main development site, south of the Nene. Although not part of the Registered Battlefield, the river crossing at Nunn Mills is thought to have formed the focus of the Lancastrian rout and therefore archaeological deposits relating to the battlefield, which can often be thinly scattered and difficult to identify, have the potential to survive within the present evaluation area.

Archaeological objectives

1.11 The objectives of the evaluation were to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality. In accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2009), the evaluation was designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered will enable Northampton Borough Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

Methodology

1.12 The evaluation comprised the excavation of three trenches in the locations shown on the attached plan. Trench 1 measured 30m in length and 1.6m in width. Trenches 2 and 3 both measured 15m in length and 1.6m in width. Trench 3 was moved slightly from its original location due to its proximity to an existing flood bank, with the approval of Lesley-Ann Mather. In order to investigate the potential for archaeological deposits to survive within and beneath any alluvial layers identified within the trenches, a machine excavated sondage of 2m length was excavated through any such deposits at the beginning, middle and end of each trench (unless
archaeological features cutting the alluvium were identified in these locations), to a maximum depth of 1.5m or the base of the alluvium, whichever occurred first. Trench sides were stepped or battered where necessary. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS, and scanned for live services by trained Cotswold Archaeology staff using CAT and Genny equipment in accordance with the Cotswold Archaeology Safe System of Work for avoiding underground services. The final 'as dug' trench plan was recorded with GPS.

1.13 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual (2013).

1.14 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites (2003). No deposits were identified that required sampling. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with Technical Manual 3 Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation (1995).

Metal detector survey methodology

1.15 Due to the site’s proximity to the site of the Battle of Northampton, an intensive metal detecting survey was initially undertaken. All trenches were scanned by an experienced battlefield archaeologist (Sam Wilson, CA), with the metal detector set in all metal mode, in 10cm spits between machining, starting at the surface of the trench. The objective was to recover a sample showing the absolute density of artefacts of all periods through the soil column and any cut features. However, during machining it became clear that modern make-up and/or levelling deposits sealing the alluvium were present in all of the excavated trenches. It was therefore decided, with the approval of Lesley-Ann Mather, to cease the metal detecting survey.

1.16 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Cirencester, and shall remain there until a suitable county museum store is provided. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.
2. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3)

2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices A and B.

2.2 In Trench 1 mid grey orange alluvial clay, 107, was recorded at the south-western end of the trench at a depth of 1.1m below present ground level (bpgl). This was overlain by a series of make-up/levelling deposits, the earliest of which, 105, contained pottery of mid to late 19th-century date. The latest of these make-up/levelling deposits, 104, was cut by large pit, 103, which contained two fills 101 and 102. Due to the instability of the trench sides it was not possible to determine the maximum depth of this feature, which extended northwards along the full length of the trench. These deposits were sealed by modern topsoil and turf 100.

2.3 In Trenches 2 and 3 mid grey/orange alluvial clay, 206 and 305, was recorded at a depth of between 0.8m and 1.02m bpgl. In these trenches the alluvium was overlain by intermittent sterile silt clay deposits, 205 and 304 respectively, measuring a maximum of 0.18m in thickness. These deposits appeared to represent an episode of alluviation or the remains of a former buried ground surface. Both deposits, 205 and 304, were overlain by a series of make-up/levelling deposits the earliest of which, 204 and 303, contained quantities of post-medieval/modern glass. In Trench 3 these deposits were cut by a modern feature, 308, probably representing part of a service trench. These deposits were in turn overlain by topsoil and turf 200 and 300 respectively.

2.4 At the north-western end of Trench 3, an irregular pit-like feature, 306, was identified. However, subsequent excavation revealed that this feature had highly diffuse edges and contained a sterile clay fill, similar in nature to the underlying alluvium. Therefore, it was interpreted as a localised change in geology.

The finds

2.5 Finds recovered from evaluation included pottery and glass. The finds are of minimal archaeological significance and will not be retained.
Pottery: post-medieval/modern

2.6 Finds recovered from evaluation included pottery and glass. The finds are of minimal archaeological significance and will not be retained. All of the pottery recovered was from make-up layer 105. Included was one rimsherd from a large vessel in Nottingham/Derbyshire stoneware, which was manufactured from the late 17th century. A fragment of a bottle and an almost complete bottle in late English stoneware were recovered: the almost complete bottle was a container for ginger beer with the legend ‘Denbigh & Co, Northampton’. Also recovered were a teapot lid in refined black earthenware, a large rimsherd from a dish in ‘flow blue’ transfer-printed refined whiteware, two sherds of porcelain and four sherds of refined whiteware. This pottery group dates to the mid to late-19th century.

Glass

2.7 A total of eight fragments of post-medieval/modern glass were recovered from make-up layers 204 and 303. This included one sherd of frosted window glass and the rim/neck of a vase from layer 303: the rest were near-complete bottles which feature mould-cast legends. Those from layer 204 were: a ‘Camp Coffee’ bottle from Paterson’s in Glasgow, who began production in 1876; a ‘Boots Cash Chemists’ bottle (this was the name of the Nottingham-based company in the late 19th century); and a hamilton mineral water bottle from Bingley’s of Northampton. The bottles from 303 were a second ‘Paterson’s Camp Coffee’ bottle and a ‘Storton’s Lungwort’ bottle from Northampton, which would have contained a tincture for the treatment of coughs and sore throats.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Despite the evaluation trenches being located in the putative location of the Lancastrian rout during the site of the Battle of Northampton (see archaeological background above), no features or deposits relating to the battle were identified during the course of the evaluation.

3.2 Evidence of ground make-up/levelling was identified in all of the excavated trenches. The broadly consistent nature of the make-up/levelling deposits encountered in each of the excavated trenches suggests that they may represent part of a concerted episode of dumping to reclaim or stabilise land adjacent to the River Nene during the post-medieval/modern period. This work seems likely to have commenced between the 1901 and 1925 editions of the Ordnance Survey, with 1925 map showing a slight
change in the line of the Nene, and the first appearance of the Midsummer Meadow recreation ground and promenade – although the 1925 map indicates the meadow was still liable to flooding at this time (Savills 2013, Fig. 7.7).

3.3 Further modern disturbance identified in Trench 1 would appear to represent the backfilling of a large pit extending beyond the limits of the trench, whilst a probable modern service trench was identified in Trench 3.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Steven Sheldon, assisted by Jerry Austin, Edward Dougherty and Sam Wilson. The report was written by Steven Sheldon. The illustrations were prepared by Jon Bennett. The finds report was written by Jacky Sommerville. The archive has been compiled by Steven Sheldon, and prepared for deposition by Jon Hart. The project was managed for CA by Simon Cox.

5. REFERENCES


CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2013a Nunn Mills, Northampton Waterside, Northamptonshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2013b The University of Northampton, Waterside Campus: Watching Brief Report. CA Typescript report No. 13470

Savills 2013 Waterside Campus, Northampton: Environment Statement
## APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench No</th>
<th>Context No</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Fill of</th>
<th>Context interpretation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>L (m)</th>
<th>W (m)</th>
<th>Dept/hickness (m)</th>
<th>Spot-date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>Fill 103</td>
<td>Fill</td>
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<td>Mid orange brown sand and gravel</td>
<td>&gt;25.6</td>
<td>&gt;1.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>102</td>
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<td>Fill</td>
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<td>&gt;25.6</td>
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<td>&gt;0.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>&gt;1.6</td>
<td>&gt;1.1</td>
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<td>&gt;1.6</td>
<td>&gt;0.4</td>
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</tr>
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<td>&gt;1.6</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<td>Deposit</td>
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<td>&gt;1.6</td>
<td>0.28</td>
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<td>Modern make-up</td>
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<td>Modern make-up</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>306</td>
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<td>Geology</td>
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<td>NE/SW service trench</td>
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<td>Fill 308</td>
<td>Fill</td>
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<td>Single fill of service trench 308</td>
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APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

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<td>Post-medieval pottery: English stoneware</td>
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<td>Post-medieval pottery: refined black earthenware</td>
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<td>Post-medieval pottery: white porcelain</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-medieval pottery: blurred transfer-printed refined whiteware</td>
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<td>204</td>
<td>Post-medieval/modern glass: vessel, window</td>
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<td>927</td>
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<td>Post-medieval/modern glass: vessel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>482</td>
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### APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

#### PROJECT DETAILS

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<td>Short description</td>
<td>An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in December 2013 at Midsummer Meadow, Northampton Waterside, Northamptonshire. Three trenches were excavated. Evidence of modern post-medieval/modern ground make-up or levelling, probably undertaken to reclaim or stabilise land adjacent to the River Nene, was identified in all of the excavated trenches. Further modern features comprising a large backfilled pit and a modern service trench were identified in Trenches 1 and 3 respectively. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified during the course of the evaluation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous work</td>
<td>Heritage Statement CA (forthcoming)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future work</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### PROJECT LOCATION

| Site Location | Nunn Mills, Northampton Waterside, Northamptonshire |
| Study area (M²/ha) | 0.3ha |
| Site co-ordinates | SP 76310 59978 |

#### PROJECT CREATORS

| Name of organisation | Cotswold Archaeology |
| Project Design (WSI) originator | Cotswold Archaeology |
| Project Manager | Simon Cox |
| Project Supervisor | Steven Sheldon |

#### MONUMENT TYPE

None

#### SIGNIFICANT FINDS

None

#### PROJECT ARCHIVES

| Intended final location of archive | Content |
| Physical | N/A | N/A |
| Paper | Northampton Museum | Context sheets, trench recording forms, section drawings, photographic registers |
| Digital | Northampton Museum | Digital photos |

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2013 *Midsummer Meadow, Northampton Waterside, Northamptonshire: Archaeological Evaluation*. CA typescript report 13687
Midsummer Meadow, Northampton Waterside, Northampton

Site location plan

Reproduced from the 1999 Ordnance Survey Explorer map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright Cotswold Archaeology Ltd 100002109
Trench 1, Section AA

Trench 2, Section BB

Trench 3, Section CC

Modern makeup/levelling deposits
Buried soil
Alluvium

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PROJECT TITLE
FIGURE TITLE
FIGURE NO.
DATE
REVISION
SCALE
@ A3

PROJECT NO.
DRAWN BY
APPROVED BY

16-12-2013
001:25
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Midsummer Meadow, Northampton Waterside
Trenches 1 to 3; sections