

***The Historic Towns of Cambridgeshire  
An Extensive Urban Survey***

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# **WATER NEWTON**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

### **Draft Report**

**Text Last Modified: 1 October 2002**

This document is an unfinished draft report compiled as a part of the Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey.

All archaeological sites reported on since the date of last modification given above are not included in this text.

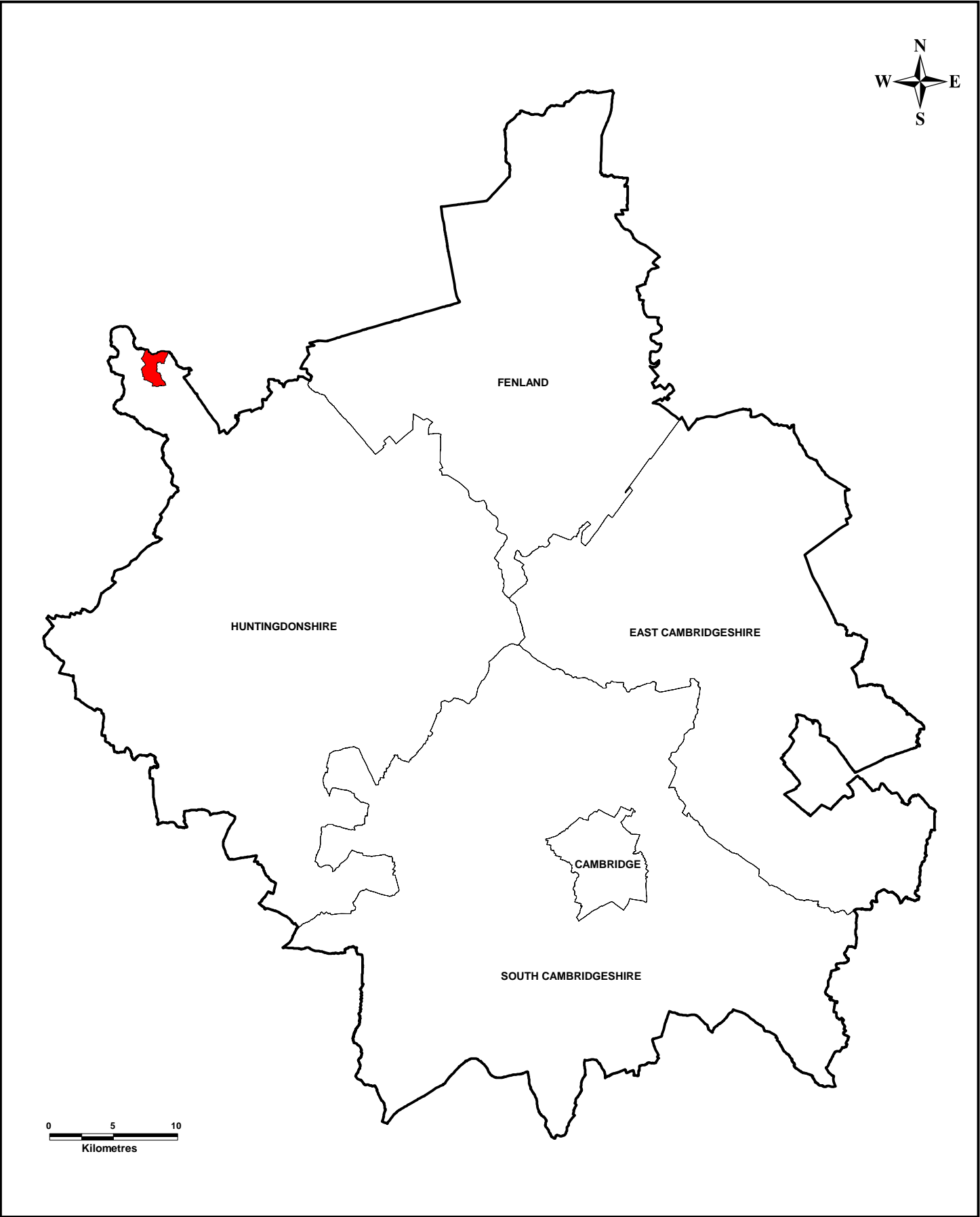
Throughout the text reference is made to Historic Environment Record (HER) numbers, Listed Building (LB) numbers and Scheduled Monument (SM) numbers. For further information on any of these sites the reader is referred to the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record.

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# Water Newton: Parish Location



Scale (at A4): 1:400000  
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By: Rik Hoggett

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List of Abbreviations Used in the Text.....	4
PART I: THE EVIDENCE .....	5
1 Introduction .....	5
1.1 Location and Topography .....	6
1.2 Geology.....	7
2 Historical and Cartographic Sources.....	7
2.1 Historical Sources .....	7
2.2 Cartographic Evidence.....	9
2.3 Aerial Photographs and Overlays of Aerial Photographs .....	10
2.4 Archaeological and Architectural Sources.....	11
3 Archaeological and Historical Background .....	15
3.1 Prehistoric.....	15
3.2 Roman .....	15
3.3 Saxon and Medieval.....	18
3.4 Post-medieval and Modern .....	19
PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE.....	21
1 Sources and Confidence Rating.....	21
1.1 The HER .....	21
1.2 Archaeological Surveys and Excavations .....	21
1.3 Cartographic Evidence.....	21
1.4 Documentary Sources.....	21
1.5 Aerial Photographs and Overlays of Aerial Photographs .....	22
2 Deposit Mapping of Archaeological Remains.....	23
2.1 Prehistoric.....	23
2.2 Roman .....	23
2.3 Saxon and Medieval.....	24
2.4 Post-medieval .....	24
3 Survival of Archaeological Remains.....	25
3.1 Prehistoric.....	25
3.2 Roman .....	25
3.3 Medieval.....	26
3.4 Post-medieval .....	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	27

## List of Abbreviations Used in the Text

CCC	Cambridgeshire County Council
CUCAP	Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs format
DoE	Department of Environment
GENUKI	Genealogy of the UK and Ireland
HER	(Cambridge) Sites and Monuments Record
HRO	Huntingdon Record Office
LB	Listed Building
NMR	National Monuments Record
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
RCHM(E)	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (of England)
SM	Scheduled Monument
VCH	Victoria County History

## PART I: THE EVIDENCE

### 1 Introduction

The parish of Water Newton belongs to Huntingdon District, in the north-western part of the County of Cambridgeshire. The village is located approximately 8km to the west of Peterborough, at a height between 10m and 15m AOD. The contour rises to 30m to the south-west. The surrounding land is mostly arable.

The village of Water Newton lies in a rich Roman landscape dominated by the 'vicus' of *Durobrivae*, together with roads, forts, villas and industrial sites, the distribution of which stretches across the parishes of Water Newton, Chesterton (SAM130), Castor and Ailsworth, in the broader context of the Lower Nene Valley. The main industries were specialised in iron working and pottery manufacture that developed on both sides of the river.

One of the major discoveries, the Water Newton Treasure or Silver Plate, suggests the presence of a wealthy proto-Christian community at *Durobrivae* in the fourth century.

The dedication of the church to Saint Remigius (d. 533), may be reminiscent of a link with this Christian community in the area. At present, however, at Water Newton there is no evidence for activity pre-dating the late Saxon period.

The earliest reference to a manor at *Niwantune* is in a charter dated 937 and preserved in the fourteenth century *Cartularium et Registrum Coenobii Thorneyensis*.

The manor is mentioned again in 973 when the *thane* Aelfric Child (later to become Ealdorman of Mercia) sold his estates to Aethelwold, bishop of Winchester, who re-founded the Abbey of Thorney.

Investigations conducted in the 1950s at the junction of Elton Road and the A1 revealed the presence of a Saxo-Norman hall which may have belonged to the *thane* Aelfric Child. The evidence pointed to an enclosed site where the hall and ancillary buildings continued to be in use until at least the late twelfth-early thirteenth century. The site does not appear to have continued into the medieval period and was probably abandoned as the later settlement developed near the ford around the thirteenth century church of St Remigius. The location of the church was probably influenced by the fact that the river Nene was part of the navigation system across the fens to Thorney Abbey. By contrast, the earlier Saxo-Norman hall lay on higher ground and dominated the ford from a safer distance.

By the time of Domesday (1086) the manor of Thorney Abbey included sixteen villagers and five small holders, a church and a priest, and two mills. The church was held by the Abbey until the Dissolution.

The locations of the manor and church mentioned in Domesday are uncertain. An earlier origin for the medieval church of St Remigius is suggested by the presence of fragments of re-used twelfth century stone in the wall of the north aisle. A manor house of unknown date, The Hall, was located to the west of the church. By 1742 it had fallen into disrepair and was in a ruinous state.

After the Dissolution the manor, fee farm rent and advowson, together with the pension from the rectory, were granted by the Crown to Sir William Willoughby. The manor subsequently passed to various owners.

In 1674 (Estate Map of Robert Smith) the settlement comprised the Church of St Remigius, a few tenements to the east of the church and the manor (the Hall) to the west. The main road was London Road that ran east to west across the settlement and then bent sharply towards the river. By 1674 some of the open fields around the village had been enclosed. A drove on the same alignment as the present Elton Road led to the southern fields that were probably still used for pasture.

By the time of the Tithe Map (1837) the village layout had changed. The main branch of London Road tangent to the river had gone out of use, its layout being marked by a field boundary. The old manor (The Hall) had already fallen into disrepair and had been replaced by smaller buildings. The area to the east of the church was abandoned probably due to flooding, with the settlement shifting westwards and southwards to the higher ground and developing at the junction between the road leading to the ford by the church and the 'new' London Road/Great North Road. The area to the east of the church was redeveloped, with the present Mill Lane leading to the watermill. The ford by the church was still in use, as the road leading to it was widened and extended along the northern side of the church.

The settlement witnessed a moderate growth in the size of the population up to the middle of the nineteenth century, as attested by the many extant buildings. However, in contrast with the situation for many parishes in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire, the size of the population started to decline from the second half of the nineteenth century. By the time of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey Map at the end of the nineteenth century the village had undergone little expansion. There has been no real change in the population figures ever since.

## **1.1 Location and Topography**

The parish of Water Newton belongs to Huntingdon District, in the north-western part of the County of Cambridgeshire. The village is located approximately 8km to the west of Peterborough.

Presently, the parish as a whole covers a small area of c. 357ha. The nucleated settlement lies immediately to the south of the River Nene that marks the boundary between Huntingdon District and the Soke of

Peterborough. The Billing Brook stream divides the parish of Water Newton from the parish of Chesterton on the east.

The old Great North Road crosses the village and joins the A1 which bypasses the village.

The built-up area is located at a height between 10m and 15m AOD and spreads across an area prone to flooding. The contour rises to 30m to the south-west. The surrounding land is mostly arable.

## **1.2 Geology**

Water Newton is sited on the First Terrace River Gravel dating from the Pleistocene and Recent geological periods. The gravels overlie Lower Estuarine Series deposits of silts and clays on Upper Clay. The higher ground is situated to the west on the Blisworth and Grantham Formation Upper Estuarine Series.

In the southern flood plain the river Nene has deposited some 0.50m of post-Roman silt *alluvium* (Macketh 1995, 150).

## **2 Historical and Cartographic Sources**

### **2.1 Historical Sources**

#### **Primary Sources**

There is no survey of the documentary sources in Cambridgeshire. A listing of historical documents is provided by Rae & Saunders (1980). Original archive research is not undertaken as part of this study. For the present survey reference is made to secondary sources. Unless otherwise cited, the following account is based upon the documentary study by W. Page (ed.) 1974, Vol. III (VCH).

#### **Secondary Sources**

General outlines of the history of the county and accounts of individual parishes based on documentary sources can be found in the VCH series of Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire. In addition, the RCHM(E) of Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire provide accounts and descriptions of extant monuments and major archaeological discoveries, with particular reference to the work of local antiquarian Edmund Tyrell Artis (1789-1847).

#### **Regional and Monographic Studies**

There are also regional studies that concentrate on specific research topics, e.g. place-names (Mawer & Stenton 1969), history and archaeology of Cambridgeshire (Fox 1923; Darby 1977; Kirby & Oosthuizen 2000), Roman pottery production in the Nene Valley (Hartley 1960; Howe *et al.* 1980; Perrin

1999, etc.), small towns of East Anglia (Brown 1995) and the Fenland in Roman times (Salway 1970).

Water Newton is recorded in the tenth century as *Niwantune* in the *Cartularium et Registrum Coenobii Thorneyensis* of 1300-1325. It is later known as *Newetone* (Domesday Book, 1086), *Newenton* (thirteenth century) and *Waterneuton* (fourteenth century). The name first appears in its current form in c. 1660 (Mawer & Stenton 1926, 201-2).

The manor of Water Newton represents one of the earliest endowments to the Benedictine Abbey of Thorney. Reference to a manor is contained in the first endowments of the Abbey founded at *Ancarig* (later Thorney) in 662 by Saxulph, Abbot of Peterborough, and after the Danish raids in 870, re-founded as the Abbey of Thorney by Aethelwold, bishop of Winchester in 972. The manor was acquired for the Abbey from the *thane* Aelfric Child (later to become Ealdorman of Mercia) and was confirmed to the abbey by King Edgar's foundation charter of 973.

Before 1066 the manor of the Abbott of Thorney was assessed at five hides taxable and had land for eight ploughs. By the time of Domesday (1086) it included in lordship two ploughs on one hide, sixteen villagers and five small holders with five ploughs, a church and a priest, two mills rendering 32s, meadows, and one custom in the Abbot of Peterborough's woodland, rendering 2s (Morris 1975, 7.5).

The location of the original church mentioned in Domesday is uncertain. It is possible that the medieval Church of St Remigius (thirteenth century) was erected on the site of a Saxon predecessor. An earlier origin for the building is suggested by the presence of fragments of re-used twelfth century stone in the wall of the north aisle (RCHME 1926, 286).

The church was held by the Abbey until the Dissolution. After the Dissolution the advowson followed the descent of the manor.

In the thirteenth century the rectory was endowed *ab antiquo* with a messuage and a *virgate* of land. A pension from the rectory was paid to the Abbot of Thorney who held in demesne three watermills, fisheries in the Nene for the whole length of the millponds, and fishing rights in the stretch of river that belonged to the manor.

In 1390 the bondmen and bondage tenants of the abbot, together with his tenants in Stanground and Yaxley, refused services and custom due and formed leagues against him.

After the Dissolution the manor, fee farm rent and advowson, together with the pension from the rectory, were granted by the Crown to Sir William Willoughby. The manor subsequently passed to various owners. The main house (The Hall) fell into disrepair and was in a ruinous state when sold in 1742 to Richard Edwards who re-used the building material to erect Water Newton Lodge in 1794.

The fields in the parish of Water Newton were enclosed before 1674 (below).

Water Newton was originally in the Peterborough Registration District of Northamptonshire from 1837. Subsequently it was transferred to the Stilton Sub-District of Huntingdonshire and later transferred back to the Peterborough District.

The settlement witnessed a moderate growth in the size of the population up to the middle of the nineteenth century. However, in contrast with the situation for many parishes in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire, the size of the population started to decline from the second half of the nineteenth century and after the Second it was reduced almost to half. There has been no real change in the figures ever since.

Population figures for the nineteenth and twentieth century are summarised below. The figures include both urban and rural population and are based on census information for the parish (1841-1891) held in the HRO and integrated with figures provided by the GENUKI web-site:

1801	108
1851	133
1901	113
1951	79
1971	69
1991	76

## **2.2 Cartographic Evidence**

The earliest map of the village was drawn in 1674 by Robert Smith (Estate Map of Water Newton).

There is no Enclosure Map for the parish. The first comprehensive and detailed map is the Tithe Map of 1837.

Smith's Estate Map depicts the Church of St Remigius (HER10332) and the old manor (The Hall) to the west. In 1674 the settlement comprised only few tenements in the form of narrow strips of land perpendicular to the river, to the east of the church. The main road (London Road) had two branches that led to the fords. One of the fords was located immediately to the west of the church, the other further to the west where the main road bent sharply in a westerly direction tangent to the river and followed the boundary between Huntingdonshire and former Northamptonshire. Further to the south, a third branch ran parallel to, and then joined, London Road to the west of the village. By 1674 some of the open fields around the village had been enclosed. The estate map shows a drove (Elton Road) on a north to south alignment heading towards the southern fields that were probably still used for pasture. The names of some of the fields, e.g. Middle Ground, Great Spring Field, Little Spring Field, Ram Field and Ram Close, are reminiscent of the old commons, although the original boundaries were probably altered at the time

of enclosure.

The tithe map of 1837 identifies the river meadow but the village envelope cannot be distinguished from other enclosures. By the time of the Tithe Map the village layout had changed. In addition to the Church of St Remigius, the map shows the Old Rectory (LB 415296), the miller's house (Mill House Farm, LB 414547) and a watermill (LB 415293). The old manor (The Hall) had already fallen into disrepair and had been replaced by smaller buildings which incorporated sixteenth century material from the Hall. Further material was re-employed for the construction of Water Newton Lodge (HER00531), some 2km to the south of the village. The area to the east of the church was abandoned probably due to flooding, with the settlement shifting westwards and southwards to the higher ground and developing at the junction between the road leading to the ford by the church and the southernmost (secondary) branch of London Road. Two inns were built at the road junction, The Farmhouse (LB 415295/HER01582) to the south of London Road, and the other inn to the north. By 1837 the main road branch tangent to the river had gone out of use, its layout being marked by a field boundary. The area to the east of the church was redeveloped, with the construction of the present Mill Lane leading to the watermill. The ford by the church was probably still in use, as the road leading to it was widened and extended along the northern side of the church. As the enclosure of the fields progressed, the north-south oriented drove (Elton Road) went out of use and was reduced in length. Its course was marked by a field boundary and possibly by a track leading to Water Newton Lodge.

By the time of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey Map at the end of the nineteenth century the village had undergone little expansion. The map shows all the main features depicted by the earlier Tithe Map. The inns had probably been converted to farmhouses, as they are not referred to as Public Houses. A smithy is marked at the junction between Mill Lane and London Road. To the west of the village are kilns and old brickworks. The old droveway (Elton Road) is represented as a minor road leading to a disused gravel quarry and to Water Newton Lodge. To the east of the village the OS Map shows sites of Roman kilns, ironworks and buildings associated with the town of *Durobrivae*.

Later editions of the OS (2<sup>nd</sup> edition of c. 1900 and 3<sup>rd</sup> series of c. 1925) do not show any significant changes within and around Water Newton.

### **2.3 Aerial Photographs and Overlays of Aerial Photographs**

The HER has a collection of maps at 1:10000 scale showing detailed overlays of oblique and vertical aerial photographs plotted in the 1980s and digitised in 2001 from research in the CUCAP and NMR collections, with additional material from the NVRC collection. The original CUCAP aerial photographs were taken between the 1950s and 1970s. The NMR aerial photographs were taken in the 1990s. The NVRC collection comprises photographs taken in the 1970s. These are currently held at Peterborough Museum.

Aerial photographs for Water Newton show cropmarks associated with the Roman walled settlement at *Durobrivae* and the earlier fort to the north-west. The cropmarks spread across the eastern parish boundary into Chesterton, and across the northern parish boundary into Castor and Ailsworth. Immediately to the east of the modern settlement are cropmark remains of a Roman road and 'building plots' (HER09094), possibly associated with a villa excavated by Artis during the 1920s (Artis 1828). Further to the east is the site of the Roman fort within which the side ditches of a road to the eastern and western gates can be seen. Outside the fort there are traces of field enclosures (HER 05316). To the south of the A1 part of a double-ditched enclosure may mark the location of a temporary camp (HER09093) possibly pre-dating the permanent fort to the north-east. Cropmark remains of multi-phase (and multi-period?) rectilinear enclosures stretch from the temporary fort to the suburbs of *Durobrivae* to the south-east. None of the sites identified on aerial photographs is visible on the ground.

## **2.4 Archaeological and Architectural Sources**

### Listed Buildings and Extant Monuments

The village of Water Newton contains one Grade II Star Listed Building (LBII\*), i.e. the Church of St Remigius, and seventeen Grade II Listed Buildings (LBII).

With the exception of Water Newton Lodge, which lies c. 2km to the south of Water Newton, the buildings are located within the post-medieval settlement, as known from cartographic evidence. They span throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The dominant local materials are Barnack limestone (walls) and Collyweston stone slate (roofs).

The buildings classed as religious include the medieval church of St Remigius, groups of post-medieval tombstones and a possible Roman coffin. Of the eight buildings presently classed as domestic five were originally for public use or service, i.e. two former inns, the former rectory, a former dovecote and a former labourers' cottage. Service and civic buildings date to the nineteenth century and include stables and boundary posts. Finally, there is an extant industrial watermill of late eighteenth century date.

The buildings are in good conditions of preservation.

Of particular interest is the parish Church of St Remigius (LB 400787, HER07016, RCHME 1926, 285, 2). The presence of re-used carved stone in the wall of the north aisle suggests that there was probably a twelfth century church on the site. The chancel was built in the thirteenth century and still survives in the present building. The plan was altered during the fourteenth century with the addition of the west tower and the re-building of the south aisle and porch. Fifteenth century alterations included the doorway to the tower and the closing of the west end of the north aisle. The church was

restored at the end of the nineteenth century when the chancel arch, and north arcade and aisle were rebuilt.

The rectory (LB 415296) to the south of the church is an early eighteenth century two-storey and attic building with later additions, including the porch.

Manor House or Water Newton House on the southern side of London Road (LB 415305, HER01582, RCHME, 288, 4) was originally a farm and an inn called The Farmhouse in 1742. It was built early in the eighteenth century on a 'T'-shaped plan with cross-wings at the north end, and altered in the nineteenth century. The windows in the south wing and cross wing, and the chimneystacks date to the seventeenth century and probably represent re-used material from the demolished Hall.

On the northern side of London road was a second inn (RCHME, 288, 5) built early in the early to mid eighteenth century on a a'L'-shaped plan with nineteenth century alterations. As with Farmhouse Inn, the seventeenth century windows in the side elevation were possibly re-used from the hall demolished in c.1750.

The water mill (LB 415293) to the east of the church was built in 1791, altered during the nineteenth century and converted into five dwellings in 1986. The main north-south range is a three-storey building with mansard roof. The steam engine house is a single storey and attic building with western outshut and red brick stack. The original machinery is largely intact, including two wheels, two pairs of stones, sack hoists and grain bins.

#### Scheduled and Conservation Areas

Scheduled Monument (SM) 130 is an area that comprises the north-eastern portion of the parish of Water Newton and extends across the neighbouring parish of Chesterton to the east, for a total of c.95ha. It starts immediately outside the village and includes sites associated with the Roman town of *Durobrivae*, namely the fort, villas and kilns. The walled town itself is in the parish of Chesterton. The area was first scheduled under the Ancient Monument Acts 1913 to 1953 and referred to as County Monument Huntingdon 18. The scheduling only comprised the fort near Water Newton and the walled town in the parish of Chesterton. Following the results from excavations conducted in the 1950s in advance of the widening of the A1 and the construction of Water Newton by-pass (below), the scheduled area was progressively extended until it reached the present boundaries in 1978 when the Department of Environment (DoE) changed the title of the County Monument.

The village contains a Conservation Area.

## Archaeological Investigations

The land around Water Newton has long been known to be of archaeological significance through the work of local antiquarian Edmund Tyrell Artis (1789-1847) whose name is associated with the discovery of kilns producing 'Castor Ware'. Artis' work is documented in his *Durobrivae of Antoninus* (1828) that, despite some inaccuracies affecting the location of the excavated sites (most notoriously the plan of the 'palace' at Castor), contains a dearth of valuable information accompanied by detailed illustrations. In particular, two villa sites with tessellated and mosaic floors, and hypocausts, HER04457 and HER09094, are located between 40m and 200m to the east of Water Newton where remains of a road are visible as a parchmark (HER09094a) that runs eastwards towards the fort (HER 05136). This latter lies some 400m to the east of the village.

In more recent times the area around *Durobrivae* has been the subject of much archaeological investigations conducted by Ernest Greenfield, on behalf of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, during the widening of the A1 in the 1950s. Greenfield supervised five main areas of excavation (Sites 1-5) along the A1 to the south of the Roman town, uncovering a portion of the wall circuit and suburban occupation with industrial activity and cemeteries, which stretched across the Billing Brook (*Anon.*1958; *Id.* 1959).

Unfortunately, with the exception of a couple of papers published in periodicals, Greenfield never produced proper excavation reports. Draft texts and incomplete texts are stored with the archive at Peterborough Museum. The pottery reports were later produced by the Nene Valley Research Committee (NVRC) (Perrin 1999).

The proposal for the construction of Water Newton by-pass in the late 1950s offered the opportunity to carry out further work in the Billing Brook area excavated by Greenfield. The Waternewton Excavation Committee (WEC, later to become the NVRC) was appointed by the Council of British Archaeology (CBA) to supervise the archaeological work, under the direction of J P Gillam, G Webster and B R Hartley (Areas 1-2-3), with contributions from F Dakin and Peterborough Museum Archaeological Field Section (Areas 4-5). The Committee carried out a series of resistivity meter and magnetometer surveys within the corridor of the proposed by-pass in order to detect the presence of pottery kilns and associated features (Perrin 1999).

In particular, Area 4 was located to the south of the junction between Mill Lane and the Old Great North Road. In the central part of Area 4 Site1-2 contained a thin occupation layer at a depth of c. 0.35m that increased to 1.5m (*alluvium?*) in the northern part of the excavated site. The occupation layer contained charcoal, first century pottery, bone and kiln debris. In Area 5 to the north of the Great North Road and east of Mill Lane there was evidence for a kiln that had been partly truncated by the trench for a drainage pipe. The kiln contained shell-gritted storage jars of Gallo-Belgic imitation and grey ware dishes and butt-beakers, probably fired at the same time but in different loads and, possibly, kilns. The pottery suggested a date around the mid-to late first

century for the kilns, proving that in the Water Newton area pottery was produced from an early date. Absence of pottery of the main Lower Nene Valley kilns suggested that occupation did not continue beyond the first quarter of the second century.

Further investigations (HER01578, 01579) conducted by the WEC at the junction of Elton Road and the A1 revealed two main periods of occupation, during the late Saxon period and in the thirteenth century (Green 1964). Saxon remains consisted of a sleeper-beam structure with clay packing cut slightly into by small postholes and a broad ditch on a north to south alignment. Based on documentary evidence, the two features were interpreted as a stockade and associated 'defensive' ditch surrounding the 'hall of a *thane*' (Aelfric Child?). Sherds of Stamford and St Neots Ware were retrieved from their basal fill of the ditch and slots. Later occupation was characterised by a system of multi-phase drystone walled enclosures with gates (sheepfolds?), small cobbled areas, a heath, a oven, post-holes and a broad shallow ditch on a north to south alignment that was still visible as a slight depression running parallel to Elton Road and ending in a water-filled hollow (a pond?). The wall rubble contained sherds of thirteenth century St. Neots Ware. Fragments of residual Roman pottery and tile from the site were interpreted as being associated with the villa site excavated by Artis further to the south (HER01710). The topsoil contained medieval and undated metal finds. At the time of the excavation the field was used for pasture, and the very shallow topsoil, together with the absence of clearly defined ploughsoil, suggested that this had been its used for a long time.

Recent development within the core of the village has offered the opportunity to investigate an area within the garden of Mill Reach, off Mill Lane, to the east of the church, in advance of building construction (Macaulay 2000). Here, a single trench exposed a high density of Roman features cut into a sandy buried soil. The features included inter-cutting postholes (for a post-built fence?), pits of varying size, shape and function, namely quarrying and rubbish tipping, and a possible boundary ditch, all of which were buried beneath a substantial overburden. Within the trench, there was a layer of imported topsoil some 0.25m thick that overlay a dark brown post-medieval (eighteenth-nineteenth century) subsoil 0.30-0.50m thick. The natural deposits consisted of sand and gravel. The pits contained, mosaic *tesserae*, fragments of roofing tile, worked stone, and local Nene Valley pottery dating to the early third and fourth centuries. The stratigraphic sequence in the trench suggested that the boundary features (ditch and fence) pre-dated the use of the site for gravel quarrying and tipping of debris, this latter being probably associated with a phase of demolition of the nearby villa excavated by Artis (HER 04457).

Finally, in 1997 a field evaluation was conducted in advance of construction of a replacement water trunk main between Duddington in Northamptonshire and Chesterton in Cambridgeshire. At Water Newton the pipeline route ran south-east from the southern side of the A1 (TL 104/971) to Elton Road (TL 107/968). Undated archaeological remains (postholes for a post-built fence and a series of parallel shallow linear features) were found in two trenches

stretching between 25m and 100m to the south of the A1 trunk. The features had been damaged by recent ploughing.

### **3 Archaeological and Historical Background**

#### **3.1 Prehistoric**

Although the Nene Valley is an area of known prehistoric activity, there are very few pre-Roman finds within and around the village of Water Newton. An unprovenanced Palaeolithic *Levallois* core was found to the south of the A1 at TL11/97 (HER 01928). However, undated copmark remains of rectilinear enclosure systems visible on aerial photographs might date to the Iron Age/Roman period. These remains are concentrated in two areas. One of the areas stretches from the Roman fort east of Water Newton to the suburbs of *Durobrivae* in the parish of Chesterton. The second area covers the southern portion of the parish of Water Newton where there is also evidence for (prehistoric?) ring ditches/barrows overlaid by medieval ridge and furrow.

#### **3.2 Roman**

The village of Water Newton lies in a rich Roman landscape dominated by the town of *Durobrivae*, major roads and minor tracks, forts, villas and industrial sites the distribution of which stretches across the parishes of Water Newton, Chesterton (SAM130), Castor and Ailsworth, in the broader context of the Lower Nene Valley. The main industries were specialised in iron working and pottery manufacture that developed on both sides of the river.

As seen above, the site of Roman *Durobrivae* has attracted the attention of antiquarians since the early part of the eighteenth century. More recent excavations and aerial photographic surveys have produced a growing body of information that has allowed a better understanding of the development of the town within a contextualised landscape.

*Durobrivae* is first listed in the Antonine Itinerary (late second century) as *Durobrivas* between *Durolipontis* (Cambridge) and *Causennis* (Ancaster). It began life as a civilian '*vicus*' attached to the pre-Flavian fort (HER05316) located some 0.50km to the east of Water Newton, at the ford where *Ermine* Street crossed the River Nene. In fact, the name *Durobrivae* means 'fort or walled town at the ford'.

By the end of the second century the civilian settlement had developed into a *mansio* surrounded by earthen ramparts and, later, into a *civitas* (Rivet 1964, 135). Towards the end of the third century the importance of the town had increased probably as the result of the decline of Stonea Grange and the Imperial Fen Estate. However, following the disruption of the central administration and the withdrawal of the army from Britain at the beginning of the fifth century, the settlement began to decline rapidly. *Durobrivae* was abandoned after the Roman period and does not appear to have continued as

an Anglo-Saxon settlement, although burials (HER09171) have been recorded close to the former Roman town in the parish of Chesterton.

Being situated at the junction of major roads (including Ermine Street) and immediately to the south of the ford, *Durobrivae* was well positioned for communication and trade across the whole of Roman Britain, including the Midlands and the North, as suggested by the widespread distribution of Nene Valley colour-coated ware.

Evidence is emerging for the organisation of the rural inter-land where villas, farmsteads and industrial sites appear to form a consistent pattern in terms of distribution in relation to the town that probably acted as a market centre.

Two villa sites, HER04457 and HER09094, are located between 40m and 200m to the east of Water Newton. Both sites were discovered and excavated by Artis (1826-1827) who drew plans of tessellated and mosaic floors. Given their close proximity, the two villas may belong to the same complex. They are located near a road visible as a parchmark (HER09094a) that runs approximately east to west towards the fort (HER 05136) and *Ermine Street*.

A third villa lies to the south of the A1 (HER01710), in an area of cropmarked rectilinear enclosures (a field system?) and remains of a double-ditched enclosure (a temporary fort?) visible on aerial photographs (HER09093). The villa site was excavated by Artis who recorded fragments of frescoed walls, tessellated floors and remains of a hypocaust system. HER01710 is not visible on the surface and there is no record of later finds from the area. A more dubious site is located 0.30km to the north west (HER01876). This could represent an extension of HER01710.

There is growing evidence that the Romano-British villa estates were centres of both agricultural and seasonal industrial activities.

Several kilns were excavated by Artis in Coneygree Field, at less than 0.50km to the east of Water Newton village (HER09095), in an area of cropmarked enclosures. The kilns were multi-period and used to fire mixed wares. Besides the kilns, Artis recorded a series of dwellings that may have represented accommodations for the potters.

The network of roads, the ford across the River Nene and the presence of early military installations along Ermine Street played a vital role in the location of the industrial sites, with particular reference to the pottery kilns, some of which began to produce pottery as early as the middle of the first century. In the past it was assumed that production of colour-coated ware at *Durobrivae* did not start before the middle of the second century, and that the earliest pottery was produced at Longthorpe (Peterborough) to supply the military garrison stationed here (Hartley 1960; Howe *et al.* 1980). However, excavations conducted by the Peterborough Museum Archaeological Field Section to the east of Mill Lane in advance of the construction of Water Newton by-pass in the late 1950s (Area 5) produced evidence for a kiln that contained Gallo-Belgic imitation and grey ware dating from the middle of the

first century to the early quarter of the second century. The excavation proved that in the Water Newton area (as at Longthorpe) pottery was produced at an early date probably to supply the fort (Perrin 1999). The industry thrived throughout the third and fourth century.

Many industrial sites were located in the context of villa estates, as suggested by the distribution of the known villas excavated by Artis and originally interpreted as accommodations for the potters. It is possible that some of the smaller villas represented ancillary sites in the orbit of major estates. Elaborate and expensive villas have been found at Castor where Artis excavated the famous 'palace' built around 300AD.

Pottery kilns have also been found within the suburbs of *Durobrivae*.

The western suburbs extended across the Billing Brook into the parish of Water Newton. The Billing Brook excavation by Greenwood in 1956-7 (Site 2) produced evidence for second and third century occupation in the form of a well together with ovens, post-holes, ditches and gravel pits. There was also evidence for several disturbed inhumations and stone coffins<sup>1</sup>. A drain trench close to Water Newton Bridge showed sections of superimposed road surfaces running parallel to the Billing Brook (Anon. 1958; Green, Unpublished, 1957).

Later excavations by the WEC to the west of the Billing Brook (Areas 2-3) produced further evidence for suburban occupation. In Area 2 immediately to the west of the Billing Brook there were remains of the multi-layered 'road' that was observed by Greenwood in Site 2. The 'road' was probably a track leading to kilns or quarries. Area 3 further to the north showed a series of kilns that were in use from c.160AD until c. 200AD and had been dismantled in turn as they went out of use. One of the latest kilns had been used to fire types with a province-wide distribution (namely, *barbotine*-decorated and undecorated indented beakers) and a local distribution (namely, brown colour coated jars and bowls based on local grey ware types (Perrin 1999).

There is no evidence that the kiln sites shifted from an earlier suburban to a later rural location or *vice-versa*. Availability of local resources, trade routes and consumers (including the early forts) seem to have been the constant factors determining preferential location for both settlements and industrial sites.

The Water Newton area has produced stray finds, namely pottery, including the famous *mortarium* with the inscription *Sennianus Durobrivis Urit* (Sennianus fired it at *Durobrivae*) (HER07795).

One of the major discoveries is the Water Newton Treasure or Silver Plate (Painter 1976; Thomas 1981, 113-121). The Treasure consisted of votive leaves and items of a Eucharist set with dedicatory inscriptions and *chi-rho*

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<sup>1</sup> A stone coffin (LBHER007016)/HER10332A) located in the churchyard of St Remigius may have come from this site or from 'Coffin Field' to the south of *Durobrivae*.

symbols. It may have belonged to a house-church or purpose-built structure for the congregation of a wealthy Christian community at *Durobrivae* in the fourth century. The use of Christian symbolism on votive leaves from the pagan tradition of *ex-voto* in temples attests to the syncretistic nature of the Treasure

### 3.3 Saxon and Medieval

The dedication of the church to Saint Remigius (d. 533)<sup>2</sup>, may be reminiscent of a link with the early Christian community in the area. At present, however, at Water Newton there is no evidence for activity pre-dating the late Saxon period.

The earliest reference to a manor at *Niwantune* is in a charter dated 937 and preserved in the fourteenth century *Cartularium et Registrum Coenobii Thorneyensis*.

The manor is mentioned again in 973 when the *thane* Aelfric Child (later to become Ealdorman of Mercia) sold his estates to Aethelwold, bishop of Winchester, who re-founded the Abbey of Thorney.

Investigations conducted by the WEC at the junction of Elton Road and the revealed evidence for a late Saxon hall which may have belonged to the *thane* Aelfric Child (Green 1962-1963). The excavated remains consisted of a stockade and associated 'defensive' ditch that produced sherds of Stamford ware. Later occupation was characterised by a system of multi-phase drystone walled enclosures, small cobbled areas of a track running parallel to the present Elton Road, a heath, a oven, post-holes and a broad shallow ditch on a north to south alignment that was still visible as a slight depression running parallel to Elton Road and ending in a water-filled hollow (a pond?). The rubble of the partition wall contained sherds of developed St. Neots Ware (Green 1962-1963).

The plan of the excavated areas suggests that the orientation of the drystone walls of the main enclosure respected the track, as the walls were laid out perpendicular and parallel to the track. The later east-west inner partition of the drystone enclosure was superimposed to the northern side of the earlier sleeper-beam enclosure of the hall. Similarly, a second wall ran along the edges of the former 'defence' ditch, suggesting continuity. To the north of the partition a series of postholes, an oven, a heath and what was originally interpreted as representing a smaller central enclosure may have belonged to ancillary buildings associated with the hall. The chronology of the pottery suggests a date between the tenth-twelfth century for the hall, and a date around the twelfth-thirteenth century for the partition wall of the enclosure.

The evidence may indicate an enclosed site where the hall continued to be in use with the earlier sleeper-beam stockade and ditch being replaced by

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<sup>2</sup> Bishop, and apostle of the Franks who baptised Clovis I king of the Franks after his sick infant son was restored to health. He founded many bishopries and churches.

drystone walls. At some stage drystone built and, possibly, post-built ancillary buildings developed outside the hall (Quinton Carroll, pers. comm.).

The site does not appear to have continued into the medieval period and was probably abandoned as the medieval settlement developed near the ford where the thirteenth century church of St Remigius was built. The location of the church was probably dictated by the presence of the ford across the Nene. The river was also part of the navigation system across the fens to Thorney Abbey.

Reference to a late Saxon church is contained in the Domesday Book. By the time of Domesday (1086) the manor of Thorney Abbey included sixteen villagers and five small holders, a church and a priest, and two mills. The church was held by the Abbey until the Dissolution.

The locations of the manor and church mentioned in Domesday are uncertain. An earlier origin for the medieval church of St Remigius is suggested by the presence of fragments of re-used twelfth century stone in the wall of the north aisle (RCHME 1926, 286).

A manor house of unknown date, The Hall, was located to the west of the church. It had fallen into disrepair and was in a ruinous state when sold in 1742 to Richard Edwards who re-used the building material to erect Water Newton Lodge in 1794. Whether the building might have had an early medieval origin remains uncertain.

### **3.4 Post-medieval and Modern**

After the Dissolution the manor, fee farm rent and advowson, together with the pension from the rectory, were granted by the Crown to Sir William Willoughby. The manor subsequently passed to various owners.

In 1674 (Estate Map of Robert Smith) the settlement comprised the Church of St Remigius, a few tenements to the east of the church and the manor (the Hall) to the west. The main road was London Road/Great North Road that ran east to west across the settlement and then bent sharply towards the river. A secondary route ran parallel to it further south (later to become London Road/Great North Road). By 1674 some of the open fields around the village had been enclosed. A drove on the same alignment as the present Elton Road led to the southern fields that were probably still used for pasture. The names of some of the fields on the Estate Map are in fact reminiscent of the old commons, although the original boundaries were altered at the time of enclosure.

By the time of the Tithe Map (1837) the village layout had changed. The main branch of London Road tangent to the river had gone out of use, its layout being marked by a field boundary. The old manor (The Hall) had already fallen into disrepair and had been replaced by smaller buildings. The area to the east of the church was abandoned probably due to flooding, with the settlement shifting westwards and southwards to the higher ground and

developing at the junction between the road leading to the ford by the church and the 'new' London Road/Great North Road. Two inns were built at the road junction. The area to the east of the church was redeveloped, with the present Mill Lane leading to the watermill. The ford by the church was probably still in use, as the road leading to it was widened and extended along the northern side of the church. As the enclosure of the fields progressed, the north-south oriented drove (Elton Road) went out of use and was reduced in length. Its course was marked by a field boundary and possibly by a track leading to Water Newton Lodge.

By the time of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey Map at the end of the nineteenth century the village had undergone little expansion. The map shows all the main features depicted by the earlier Tithe Map. Later editions of the OS (2<sup>nd</sup> edition of c.1900 and 3<sup>rd</sup> series of c.1925) do not show any significant changes within and around Water Newton.

The settlement witnessed a moderate growth in the size of the population up to the middle of the nineteenth century. However, in contrast with the situation for many parishes in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire, the size of the population started to decline from the second half of the nineteenth century and after the Second it was reduced almost to half. There has been no real change in the figures ever since.

## **PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE**

### **1 Sources and Confidence Rating**

#### **1.1 The HER**

The HER of Cambridgeshire County Council records many finds in the study area. Most entries refer to the following:

- Roman villas and kilns known from antiquarian observations
- Undated cropmarks visible on aerial photographs
- Post-medieval extant buildings

The information provided by the HER is affected by the following:

- Distribution of entries with a bias towards excavated remains of the Roman period, with particular reference to villa sites.
- The HER collection represents a variable source of information that has been influenced by fieldwork strategies, collection of finds, antiquarian observations, local and professional interests. The degree of accuracy of the entry is therefore variable

#### **1.2 Archaeological Surveys and Excavations**

Water Newton has benefited from antiquarian and more recent excavations in the context of Roman *Durobrivae*. Furthermore, lack of post-medieval and modern settlement expansion has contributed to the preservation of land surface available for future archaeological investigations within and outside the built-up area.

Post-PPG 16 development has offered the opportunity to investigate and record finds at Mill Reach, to the east of the church. A small area excavation is presently in progress immediately to the south of the church.

#### **1.3 Cartographic Evidence**

The first comprehensive and detailed map of the parish is Smith's Map of 1674, followed by the Tithe Map of 1837. Later maps include Ordnance Surveys from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.

Bearing in mind the varying degree of accuracy and detailing of the pre-Ordnance Survey maps, as a whole, the available cartographic evidence provides useful information for the post-medieval and more recent development of the village and its surrounding landscape.

#### **1.4 Documentary Sources**

Primary Sources

There are only few documentary references to Saxon and medieval Water

Newton, including the Domesday Book, medieval cartularies, Saxon Charters, the Hundred Rolls and the Calendar of Patent Rolls series. Most entries refer to Thorney Abbey.

#### Secondary Sources

General outlines of the history of the county together with accounts of individual parishes and extant monuments are provided by the VCH and the RCHM(E) series of both Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. The VCHs, in particular, include references to primary sources.

The VCHs and RCHM(E)s tend to be biased towards the following:

- the medieval ecclesiastical history
- the medieval origin and development of the villages with emphasis on extant monuments and earthwork remains
- social history

As a whole, the available documentary sources provide useful and reliable information on the historic, economic and social development of the villages. They are researched by experts within fields, by local historians and by amateurs.

### **1.5 Aerial Photographs and Overlays of Aerial Photographs**

The aerial photographic collections for Water Newton (CUCAP 1950s-1970s; NVRC 1970s; NMR 1990s) represent a valuable source of information. The degree of definition of the visible cropmarks is good, as features are predominantly located on dry and light soils and on arable land. None of the sites identified on aerial photographs is presently visible on the ground.

There are two main areas of cropmark distribution. The first area includes remains associated with the Roman walled settlement at *Durobrivae* (namely, the fort, villas and kilns). These remains spread across the eastern parish boundary into Chesterton, and across the northern parish boundary into Castor and Ailsworth. The second area includes cropmark remains of multi-phase (Iron Age/Roman?) rectilinear enclosures and (prehistoric?) ring ditches overlain by medieval ridge and furrow visible across the southern portion of the parish. Between these two areas there is a findless 'empty zone'. Absence of cropmarks may be due to the condition of the fields during aerial reconnaissance, together with damage caused by modern ploughing.

As a whole, the distribution of cropmarks in the Water Newton area is consistent with the known evidence for Roman occupation to the north and south of the River Nene.

There has been no recent re-assessment of the collections.

## 2 Deposit Mapping of Archaeological Remains

In this section an attempt has been made to map all known monuments and events and, based on mapping, to predict the existence of further remains in most likely areas. The outcomes should not be used to produce 'constraint maps'.

The available stratigraphic information is too limited and variable to allow to predict variation in type and depth of deposits across the settlement under study. In synthesis:

- The site excavated in the late 1950s to the south of the junction between Mill Lane and the Old Great North Road (WEC, Area 4) contained a thin occupation layer dating to the Roman period. It was encountered at a depth of c. 0.35m that increased to 1.5m in the northern part of the excavated site.
- The site at the junction of Elton Road and the A1 (WEC) revealed Saxo-Norman features underneath a thin layer of topsoil. At the time of the excavation (late 1950s) the field was used for pasture.
- The site at Mill Reach, off Mill Lane (Macaulay 2000), revealed a high density of Roman features cut into a sandy buried soil and sealed by a dark brown post-medieval (eighteenth-nineteenth century) layer of subsoil 0.30-0.50m thick. The imported topsoil was some 0.25m thick. The natural deposits consisted of sand and gravel.

### 2.1 Prehistoric

Although the Nene Valley is an area of known prehistoric activity, there are very few pre-Roman finds within and around the village of Water Newton. Lack of evidence is partly due to a biased attitude towards well-preserved and ubiquitous Roman remains that have attracted the attention of local antiquarians from the earlier part of the nineteenth century.

However, undated copmark remains of rectilinear enclosure systems and ring ditches visible on aerial photographs might date to the later prehistoric period.

Based on the available evidence, it is not possible to predict the existence of prehistoric sites within and immediately around Water Newton. Areas that escaped destruction caused by Roman occupation and medieval and post-medieval land use could potentially produce prehistoric remains.

### 2.2 Roman

There is potential for the survival of Roman remains almost anywhere within and around the modern settlement. In fact, evidence for Roman activity at Water Newton is rich, with particular reference to the rural and industrial sites in the orbit of *Durobrivae* (presently contained within SAM 130). As the result of past antiquarian observations, however, the distribution of known sites is biased towards 'glamorous remains' of villa buildings and kilns.

### 2.3 Saxon and Medieval

Post Roman/early Saxon Water Newton is unknown. The first available evidence for post-Roman occupation in the area is represented by Saxo-Norman remains of an occupation site located at the junction between the A1 and Elton Road. The site has been associated with the *thane* Aelfric Child known from historical sources to have sold his land to Thorney Abbey at the end of the tenth century. The extent of occupation is uncertain as only the area threatened by the construction of the A1 by-pass was investigated. There is potential for the survival of remains associated with the 'hall' on both sides of the A1 trunk.

Medieval Water Newton is presently unknown, although the church of St Remigius is likely to have acted as a focus for settlement development during the thirteenth-fourteenth century. Post-medieval and modern development are likely to have partly obliterated earlier remains. However, cartographic evidence seems to suggest that expansion was never dense. Undeveloped areas within the present settlements may contain medieval remains.

In particular, although presently unknown, light industrial activity (e.g. tanning, pottery production, iron smelting, etc.) may have been conducted along the riverside.

Immediately outside the built-up area there is potential for the survival of field-systems, although the distribution of cropmarks visible on aerial photographs seems to stretch across the southern part of the parish, with no evidence for ridge and furrow within and immediately around Water Newton.

### 2.4 Post-medieval

Post-medieval Water Newton is well documented through extant buildings and cartographic evidence. In particular, post-medieval development is reflected by the present layout of the village where eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings survive in a fairly good state of preservation. Most of them are listed (LBII) and have statutory protection.

As with the medieval period, there is potential for the survival of field-systems immediately outside the built-up area and for light industrial activity (e.g. tanning, pottery production, iron smelting, etc.) and crop processing (milling) along the riverside.

A water mill depicted on the Tithe Map of 1837 is still extant. For the nineteenth century there is also cartographic evidence for brickworks immediately to the west of the village. In addition, a smithy was located at the junction between Mill Lane and the Great North Road (OS 1<sup>st</sup> ed., c. 1890).

### **3 Survival of Archaeological Remains**

In this section an attempt is made to assess the condition of preservation of archaeological remains in the areas defined by deposit mapping. The assessment takes the form of a prediction model based on probability and not certainty. It is meant as a guide only.

Within the study area there is potential for the survival of remains of all periods. The village of Water Newton has not undergone dramatic expansion during the post-medieval and modern periods. The built-up area contains large pockets of undeveloped land

With reference to the immediate surroundings, the scheduled area (SAM 130) to the east and south-east of the village contains numerous finds known from antiquarian excavations and visible as cropmark remains on aerial photographs.

By contrast, the area to the east and south-east does not contain any known finds. Ploughing and absence of archaeological investigations are partly responsible for this 'empty' zone. A field evaluation conducted in 1997 in advance of the replacement of a water main between the southern side of the A1 at TL 104/971 and Elton Road exposed undated features that had been severely damaged by recent ploughing. The evaluation was confined to a narrow corridor. Nonetheless, the results could be taken as a representation of the degree of damage caused by modern farming techniques.

#### **3.1 Prehistoric**

Mapping suggests that the prehistoric period may be under-represented, as the location of these remains is least well known and finds least well preserved, with particular reference to ceramics artefacts.

Absence of archaeological investigations has prevented an assessment of the state of preservation of potential pre-medieval remains. As a result, prehistoric finds from the village and immediate surroundings are poorly represented. Absence of evidence is more likely to be due to obliteration caused by later, namely Roman, medieval and post-medieval, remains. As a whole the rate of survival for the prehistoric period can only be described as unknown.

#### **3.2 Roman**

Most of the area of known Roman occupation to the east of Water Newton is scheduled (SAM 130). The present land use is arable. The degree of damage caused by modern ploughing within the past few decades is unknown.

Medieval and post-medieval ploughing are also likely to mask earlier remains. Within the settlement, a recent evaluation at Mill Reach has produced evidence for Roman remains that had been preserved beneath the late post-medieval plough soil.

### **3.3 Medieval**

At the time of the excavation at the junction between Elton Road and the A1 (late 1960s) the field was used for pasture, and the very shallow topsoil, together with the absence of clearly defined ploughsoil, indicated that this had been its used for a long time. However, medieval metalwork and pottery from the subsoil would suggest that post-medieval ploughing had caused some degree of disturbance of the earlier medieval deposits. The surrounding area is presently arable. As for the Roman period, modern ploughing is likely to have caused damage. The degree and extent of damage is presently unknown.

With reference to the settlement area, the nucleus of medieval occupation has not been located. Post-medieval activity and development are likely to have partially obliterated earlier medieval remains. However, many undeveloped pockets of land around the church may contain relatively undisturbed remains.

### **3.4 Post-medieval**

The condition of the extant Listed Buildings is generally good.

Other potential post-medieval remains (e.g. former property boundaries, industrial remains) are expected to have survived in undeveloped pockets within the village envelope.

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JRPS	Journal of Roman Pottery Studies
RCHM(E)	Royal Commissions of the Historical Monuments (of England)
VCH	Victoria County History

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