

# The Archaeological Field Centre— Ham Lane House

*by Adrian Challands*

An Edwardian farm house, situated in a rural setting near what will ultimately be the Ferry Meadows Water Recreational Area, has been converted and extended (fig. 22) by the Nene Valley Research Committee, with the financial backing and practical architectural supervision and design of the buildings by the owners — the Peterborough Development Corporation, to form the first purpose-built archaeological field centre in the country.

The converted house now contains three splendid offices to accommodate the Director of Excavations, Assistant Director and a Secretary/Archive. In addition, a single room is fitted out for the storage of archives such as site records, books and stationery. The staff comfort is catered for in the house by the provision of a small kitchenette and staff room. A one-person flat comprises most of the first floor of the house section.

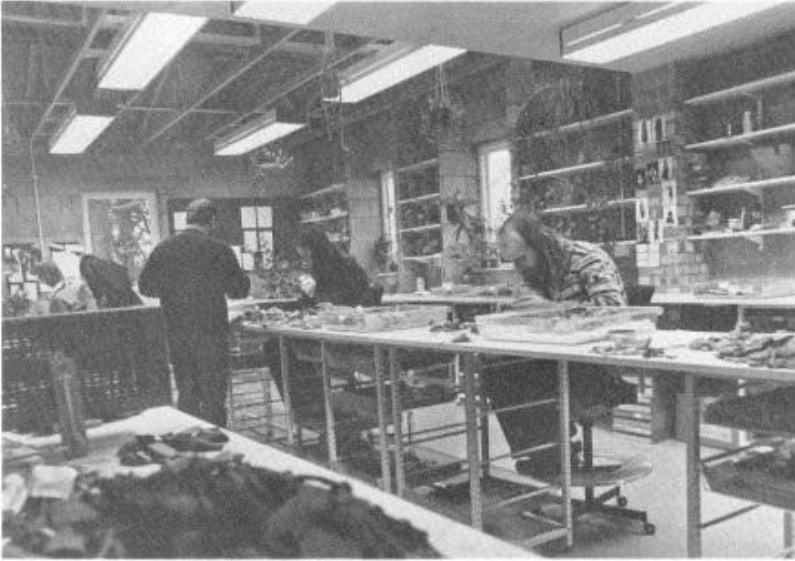
As the main aim of the Nene Valley Research Committee is to publish the results of its archaeological excavations, adequate space is required to carry out the task. To this end an extension, joined to the existing house by a passageway, was added. It is designed to provide an area where artifacts from excavations may be studied (fig. 23), compared, initially conserved and drawn. The open-plan arrangement of the new building is ideal for sorting and classifying pottery on long benches (fig. 24). One section houses three drawing boards, of which one is two metres long! A small, well equipped area copes with items requiring urgent conservation (fig. 25) such as small bronze items, leather, iron and wood. Another section is equipped with a re-inforced polythene tank, over three metres long, used for storage below water of large timbers recovered from waterlogged sites. Small finds are stored in a separate room which is monitored for variations in temperature and humidity. The photographic dark-room, again separate from the main area, is not yet equipped. The Nene Valley Research Committee's archaeological unit finally moved into the Field Centre from temporary accommodation in a bungalow at Fengate in April, 1976. A total of seven full-time staff now work at the Centre, supplemented at intervals by site staff.



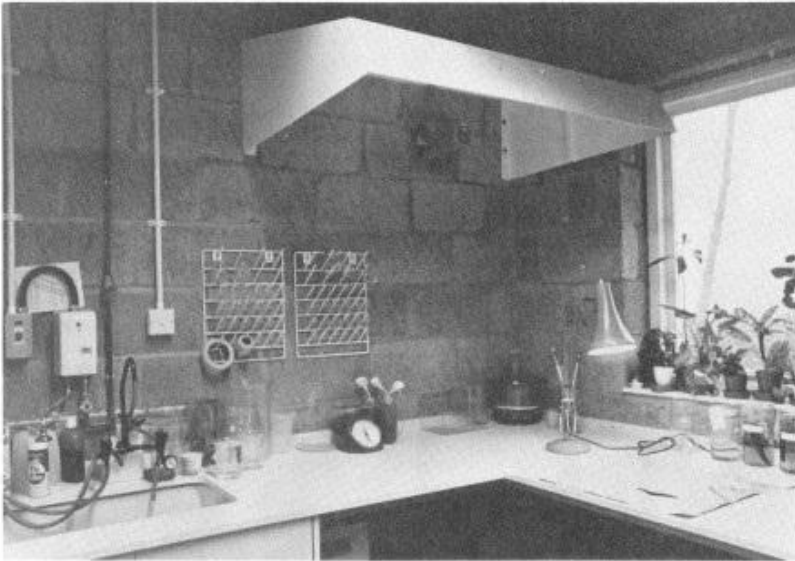
*Fig 22 Archaeological Field Centre with new extension to the left*



*Fig 23 Pottery fabric being examined under a binocular microscope*



*Fig 24 Sorting and classifying pottery in the Finds Processing Area*



*Fig 25 Conservation Bay*