

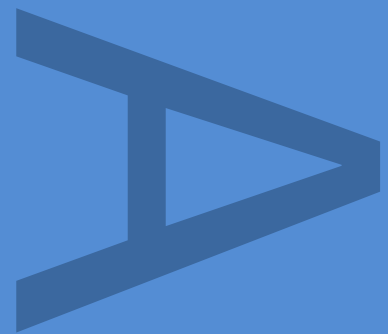
THE GABLES,  
MAIN STREET, LEIRE,  
LEICESTERSHIRE



AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
OBSERVATION



January 2016



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY  
R12340

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**The Gables, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire:  
An Archaeological Observation**

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**Local Planning Authority:**                    **Harborough District Council**

**Central National Grid Reference:**        **NGR SP 52475 90197**

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**January 2016**

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**PCA Report No. R12340**

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## **Abstract**

*An archaeological observation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on the site of the former The Gables, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire during the partial demolition of the structure and groundworks to its rear. The 'Hatchery' building had undergone a Historic Building Assessment prior to this. The observation was commissioned by Mr George Burton of GB a&e Ltd on behalf of Mr & Mrs Harvey. During the observation two sherds of residual medieval pottery were recovered and some layers that may represent earlier phases of post-medieval occupation that were identified beneath the partially demolished building; within one of these were two sherds of 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Within the grounds to the rear of the property a possible track was identified that may relate to this earlier post-medieval occupation.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 Pre-construct Archaeology Ltd were commissioned by Mr George Burton of GB a&e Ltd, on behalf of Mr & Mrs Harvey, to undertake as part of a planning application 13/01786/FUL, an archaeological Watching Brief at The Gables, Main Street, Leire Leicestershire. The following report contains the recorded archaeological record from this watching brief.

### **1.2 Site Location and Description**

1.2.1 The study area, lies within the central core of Leire and is centred at NGR SP 52475 90197. The development site is in the grounds of The Gables which is sited on the west side of Main Street c.64m north of the junction with Back Lane. The site is bound to the south by various domestic properties all fronting Back Lane. To the north is the property called Ash House, consisting of a domestic dwelling and formal gardens. Back Lane bounds the site to the west and to the east is Main Street.

### **1.3 Topography and Geology**

1.3.1 The subject site is located in the central core of the village of Leire. The site is currently a level formal garden with large trees and bushes. To the North and South are gardens of domestic properties; to the West is Main Street with Back Lane to the East. A spot height taken in front of the house is recorded at 109.62 AOD.

1.3.2 The subject site is characterised by the bedrock formation of Mercia Mudstone formed during the Triassic periods. The overlying superficial deposits are clay and silt of the Bosworth Clay Member formed in the Quaternary – (British geological Survey [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)).

### **1.4 Historical and Archaeological Background**

1.4.1 A Desk-Based Assessment has not been undertaken in advance of the forthcoming fieldwork, however a historic Building Survey has been undertaken of the Hatchery (an out building in the ground of the Gables) this and the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) show that the application site lies within an area of archaeological interest.

1.4.2 Leire is an historic settlement (Leicestershire Historic Record Reference MLE9316). It is thought it take its name from the old English name for the river Soar: *Legre* a tributary of which has its source to the south of the village. Leire is mentioned on three occasions in the Domesday Book with the Bishop of Lincoln holding 1 c. of land (3.3), Robert of Bucy holding 2 c. of land (17.2) and Robert of Bursar holding 5 c. of land (19.1). It lay within the hundred of Guthlaxton and prior to 1066 was under the lordship of Alwln.

1.4.3 The remains of a medieval settlement have been uncovered in Leire as has material dating to the prehistoric and Roman periods however none of this material is of direct relation to the study area.

1.4.4 Several archaeological investigations have taken place within 100m of the site, an investigation by ULAS in 2002 at the junction of Main Street and Back Lane c.60m south of the development site

revealing nothing of archaeological interest. A watching brief undertaken at The Old Manor c.96 to the south east located several post-medieval and modern pits.

- 1.4.5 Within the ground of the Gables is the Hatchery an 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> century brick built ancillary building. It is not a listed building but considered an undesignated heritage asset of local historic interest. The Hatchery has been considerably altered externally and internally over the centuries hence it retains few extant original fixtures and fittings and little spatial integrity relating to its original function as a part stable, part storage 'barn' serving the adjacent Gables. (Garwood 2014)
- 1.4.6 There are five Grade II listed property's within 250m of the site, all five front Main Street. The oldest is The Old Manor a timber framed building with brick infill and thatch, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century. There are two late 18<sup>th</sup> Century houses; Gleb House a 3 storey brick dwelling and Rose Cottage a one and a half storey building once two dwellings now just one, built from rough cast over bricks. Finally, Western House with its Flemish bond brickwork was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century at a similar time to the brick built domestic residence Airdale.

## **2 AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

The aims and objectives of the investigation were:

- To establish the location, nature, extent, date and state of preservation of any archaeological or geo-archaeological deposits or features within the site, to recover any associated objects and to record the surviving evidence.
- To analyse and interpret the site archive and to disseminate the results to promote local and national research objectives.
- To deposit the site archive with the Leicestershire Museum Service for long term conservation.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Fieldwork Methodology**

- 3.1.1 Archaeological supervision took place during the ground disturbance involved in the partial demolition of 'The Gables', Main Street, Leire prior to development. An outbuilding to the rear of this building had undergone a Historic Building survey prior to this partial demolition (Garwood 2014). Additional supervision took place during the groundworks associated with the new dwellings and associated access, services and landscaping, to the rear of the existing building.
- 3.1.2 All exposed deposits/layers were cleaned using hand tools and recorded as set out in the PCA fieldwork manual (Taylor and Brown 2009). Contexts were recorded according to PCAs fieldwork manual approved for use in Lincolnshire, including written, photographic and drawn records.
- 3.1.3 Deposits or the removal of deposits judged by the excavating archaeologist to constitute individual events were each assigned a unique record number (often referred to within British archaeology as 'context numbers') and recorded utilising PCAs printed *pro forma*.

#### **3.2 Post Fieldwork Methodology**

- 5.2.1 English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (EH 2006) was used as the framework for post-excavation work.
- 5.2.2 No finds were recovered from the fieldwork phase, although a paper and digital archive was produced that will be transferred to the receiving museum with the agreement of the landowner.

#### **3.3 The Contexts**

- 3.3.1 A unique context number was assigned to each distinguishable depositional event. Context numbers will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4 and will be given in bold.
- 3.3.2 Eleven context numbers were allocated to layers whilst another two were given to some remaining upstanding structure the 'Hatchery'. They are presented in the Appendix (see Table 1).



## **4 THE RESULTS**

### **4.1 Natural deposits**

4.1.1 The natural deposits encountered during the observation consisted of a mid-greyish brown top soils containing occasional small pebbles (context **111**) and a mid-orangepy brown friable clayey sand that was exposed during monitoring of house footings footprint (context **112**). Context **106**, a firm, greyish brown sandy clay that was exposed at the base of test sondage dug at the frontage of the site was also possibly natural.

### **4.2 Modern (1800 - Present)**

4.2.1 A layer of garden topsoil was uncovered at the rear of the property to a depth of c.0.20m (context **109**). This was composed of dark greyish brown silty clay and contained three sherds of 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery and a residual medieval bowl sherd of 12-13<sup>th</sup> century date. Beneath this a loose cobbled surface (**110**) was exposed made up of yellow-brown sandy clay and containing frequent rounded pebbles and occasional small brick fragments. It has been interpreted as being a possible track and may relate to a former building on the site dating from the Modern or perhaps the Post-medieval period.

4.2.2 Context number **101** was a disturbed layer beneath the concrete floor (**100**) of the partially demolished structure. There were no visible features of finds within this layer although there were occasional stone and mortar fragments. Beneath this layer was dark greyish brown deposit of silty/sandy clay that contained three sherds of pottery, two of 18<sup>th</sup> century date and a residual medieval jug fragment of 13-15<sup>th</sup> century date (**102**). This has been interpreted as being an initial disuse layer that overlies the possible clay floor (**103**) of a potential earlier structure. This potential earlier occupation layer contained two sherds of pottery dating from the late 17-19<sup>th</sup> century along with a small piece of roofing tile, therefore it is possible that this layer is late Post-medieval rather than modern. Underlying this layer are two additional potential floor/occupation layer surfaces made up of firm, sandy clay that are reddish brown (**104**) and yellowish brown (**105**).

4.2.3 Two remaining elements of the partially demolished 'Hatchery' building were identified and recorded during the watching brief. These were are portion of its northern extent, constructed from modern brick and mortar c.3x4.9m (context **107**) and the stone footings for this structure which were made of stone and mortar (**108**).

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The observation fulfilled the aims and objectives of the monitoring of demolition by identifying and recording a limited sequence of events associated with the construction of the Gables', possible earlier occupation at the site and linked activity at its rear.
- 5.2 Natural deposits recorded on the site were the subsoil to the rear of the property and a clayey sand deposit that may represent the superficial deposits in the area is discussed earlier with reference to the British Geological Survey.
- 5.3 No clear evidence of any Prehistoric, Roman, Post-Roman and medieval activity was present on this site, although two residual medieval pottery sherds were found in later post-medieval contexts.
- 5.4 Later Post-medieval/ Modern activity on the site was comprised of the existing remains of the building itself and of the 'Hatchery'. Additionally, there is potential evidence of earlier occupation beneath the demolished remains of the building which may represent earlier Modern activity or later Post-medieval occupation.

## **6. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Garwood, A., 2014, *Historic Building Survey of The Hatchery, The Gables, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire*, Pre-construct Archaeology Ltd, Unpublished

Taylor, J. & Brown, G. 2009. PCA Fieldwork Induction Manual Operations Manual 1

### **Online Sources**

British Geological Survey: Geology of Britain viewer

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> accessed 03/06/2015

## **7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Pre-construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank GB a&e Ltd for commissioning the work on behalf of Mr and Mrs Harvey. The watching brief was carried out by Steve Jones. Project management undertaken by Kevin Trott of PCA Midlands. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by Hayley Baxter of PCA's CAD department. Additional thanks to Adam Garwood for his prior research on the historical background of the site and its vicinity.

## PLATES



Plate 1: Plan of front part of site, facing southeast.



Plate 2: North facing section showing contexts **100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105 and 106.**





Plate 3: Shot of front of site from northeast



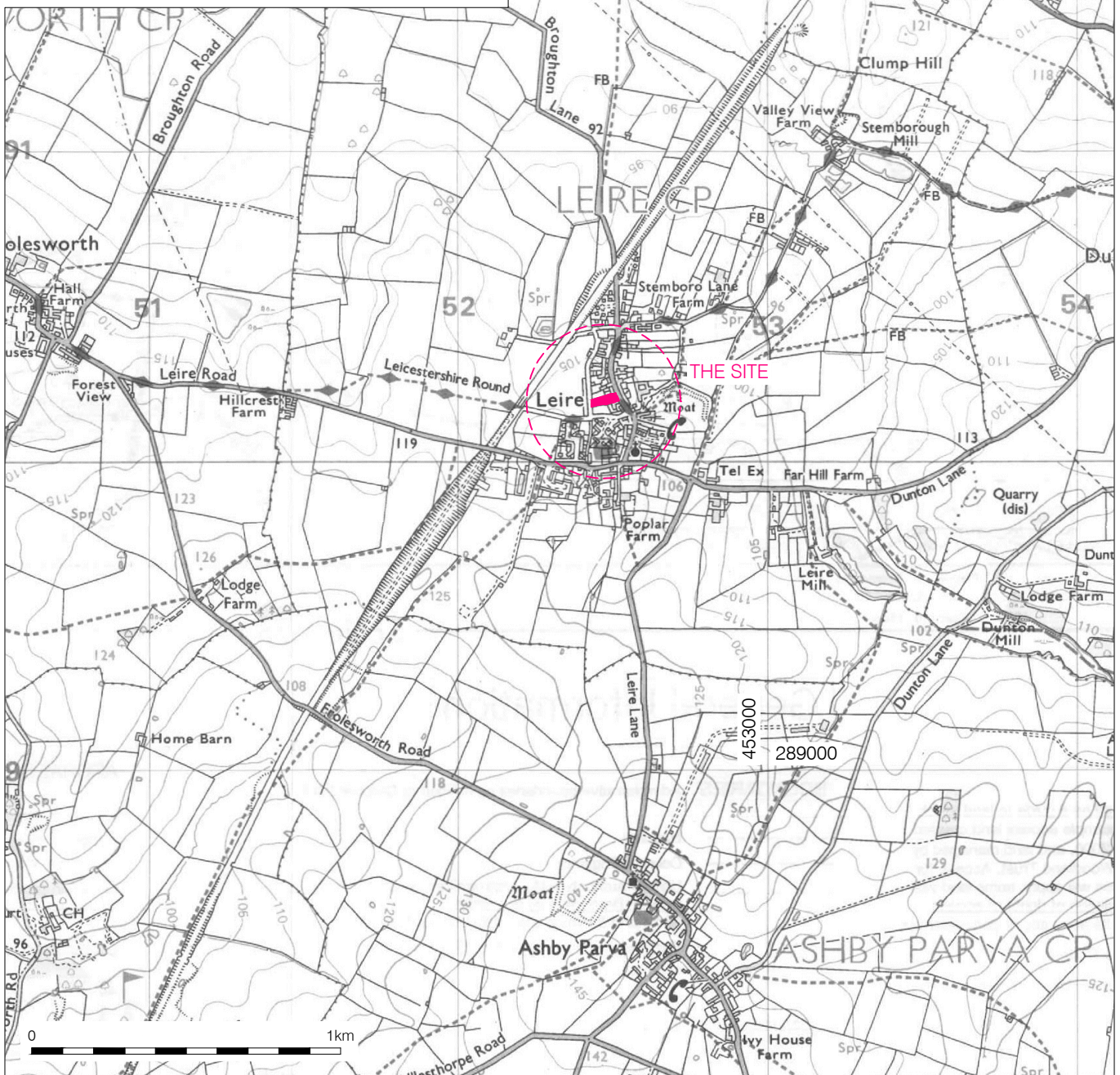
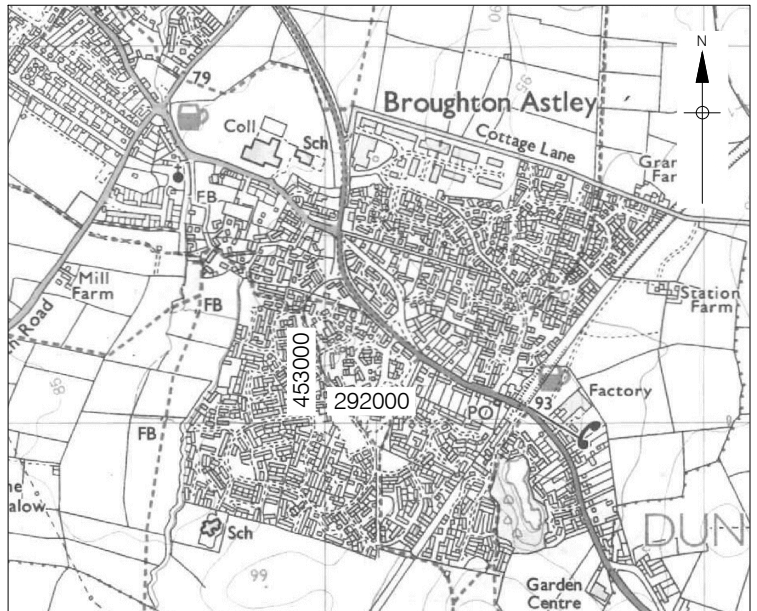
Plate 4: North facing section showing contexts **109, 110, 111** and **112**.





Plate 5: General view of rear of site





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Figure 1  
 Site Location  
 1:2,000,000 & 1:20,000 at A4

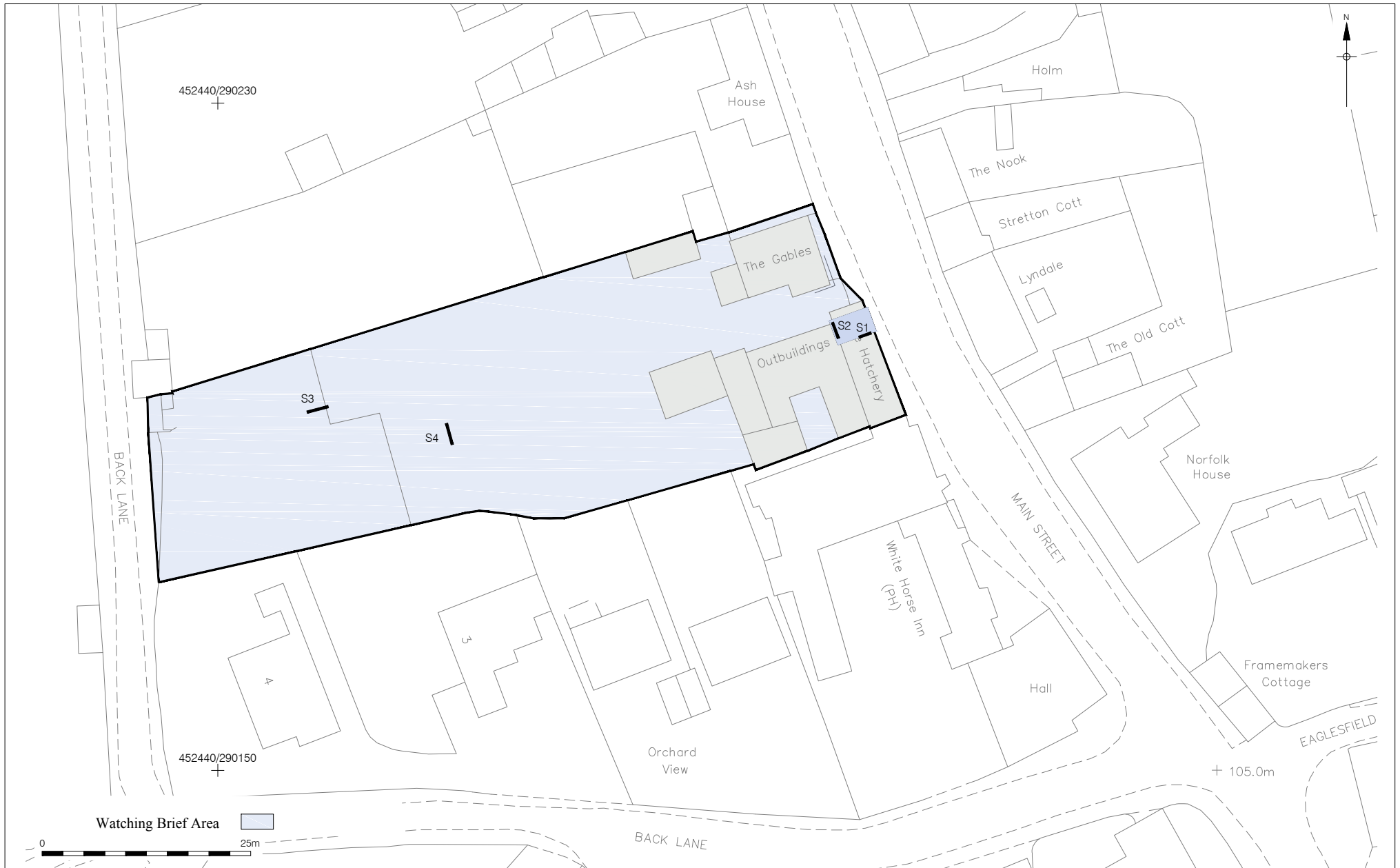
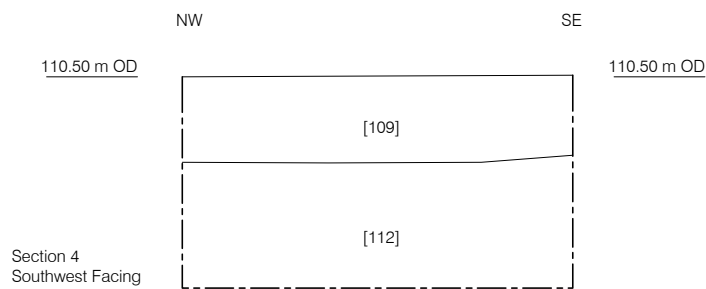
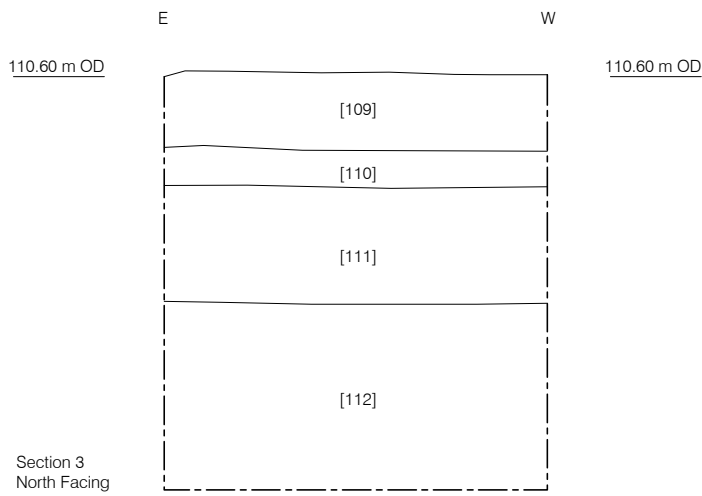
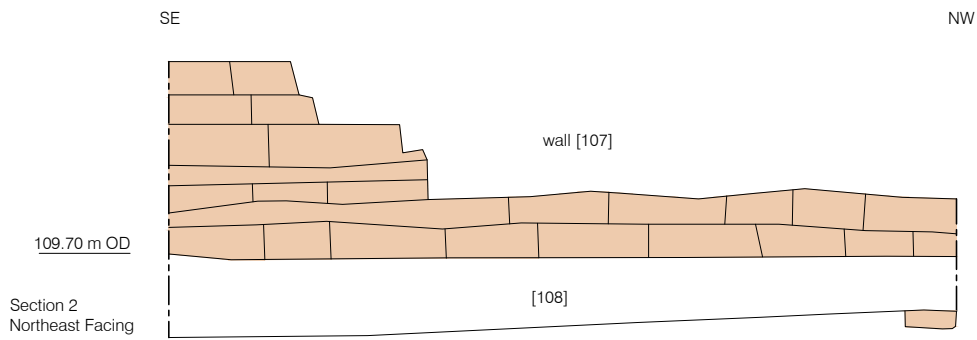
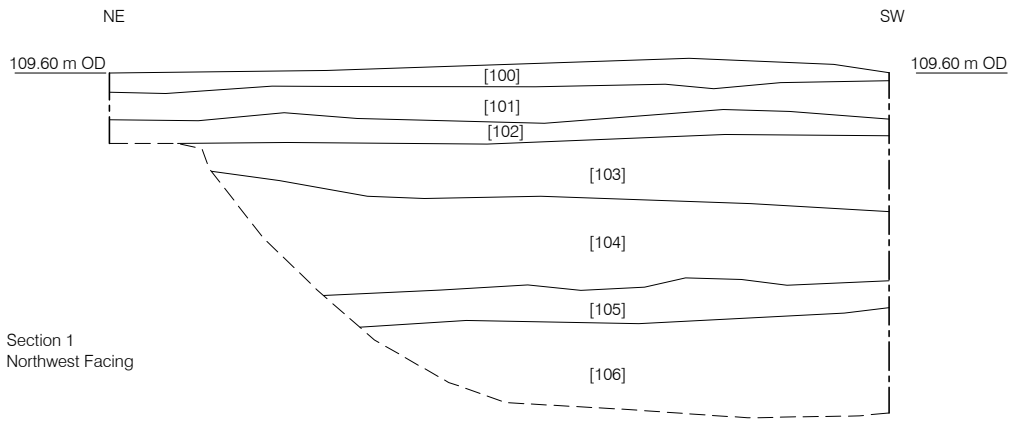


Figure 2  
 Detailed Site Location  
 1:625 at A4





Brick 



## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Abbreviations: UE means 'unexcavated'; N/A means 'not applicable'; > means 'greater than'; < means 'up to'; Context numbers are followed by a brief description and interpretation; their dimensions in metres (in the order length x width x depth; or diameter x depth); and their critical stratigraphic relationships.

Context	Category	Description			Interpretation	Dimensions (m)	After	Before
		Colour	Texture	Inclusions				
100	Surface	Pale Whitish Grey	Hard - concrete		Modern concrete floor; part of removed western extent of 'The Hatchery'	0.05m deep	101	
101	Layer	Mixed – yellow brown, mid brown, greyish brown	Friable sandy clay with occasional mortar	Occasional charcoal, mortar and stone fragments	Disturbed layer sealed by concrete floor (100)	0.1m deep	102	100
102	Layer	Dark greyish brown	Friable silty/sandy clay	Very occasional small stones, charcoal, mixed with red clay in places	Dark layer overlying compact floor layer (104) – initial disuse layer of earlier structure? – 1 pot sherd retrieved.	0.1m deep	103	101
103	Surface/ Layer	Yellow brown	Firm sandy clay	Occasional charcoal and small stones	Possible clay floor associated with an earlier building/occupation	0.11m deep	104	102
104	Layer	Reddish brown	Firm sandy clay	Very occasional charcoal, very occasional mortar flecks	Earlier floor/occupation layer	0.2m deep	105	103
105	Layer	Yellow brown	Firm sandy clay	Occasional large stones and mortar flecks	Earlier occupation layer	0.6m deep	106	104

106	Layer	Greyish brown	Firm sandy clay		Clay exposed at base of test sondage dug at frontage – possibly natural			105
107	Wall		Modern brick and mortar wall		Northern extent of 'Hatchery' demolished – constructed from modern brick	3m x 4.9m structure exposed	108	
108	Wall		Sandstone with whitish, firm mortar		Stone footings of northern extent of the 'Hatchery'	3m x 4.05m		107
109	Layer	Dark greyish brown	Friable silty clay	Occasional roots, brick fragments and very occasional charcoal	Topsoil – garden soil at rear of the property	0.2m deep	110	
110	Surface	Yellow brown	Compact-friable sandy clay mixed with pebbles	Frequent rounded pebbles and occasional brick fragments	Surface exposed in western extent of monitored area – just below topsoil. Could relate to former modern/Victorian or late Post-med track	0.1m deep	111	
111	Layer	Mid greyish brown	Friable sandy clay	Occasional charcoal, very occasional small pebbles	Subsoil	0.3m deep		110
112	Deposit	Mid orange brown	Friable clayey sand		Natural sand exposed during monitoring of house footings footprint			109

## APPENDIX 2: OASIS SHEET

OASIS ID: preconst1-239388

### Project details

Project name	The Gables, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire
Short description of the project	An archaeological observation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on the site of the former The Gables, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire during the partial demolition of the structure and groundworks to its rear. The 'Hatchery' building had undergone a Historic Building Assessment prior to this. The observation was commissioned by Mr George Burton of GB a and e Ltd on behalf of Mr and Mrs Harvey. During the observation two sherds of residual medieval pottery were recovered and some layers that may represent earlier phases of post-medieval occupation that were identified beneath the partially demolished building; within one of these were two sherds of 18th century pottery. Within the grounds to the rear of the property a possible track was identified that may relate to this earlier post-medieval occupation.
Project dates	Start: 01-08-2015 End: 20-01-2016
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	HGMS14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"

### Project location

Country	England
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Site location	LEICESTERSHIRE HARBOROUGH LEIRE The Hatchery, The Gables, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire
Postcode	LE17 5HE
Study area	1592 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 52475 90197 52.506773139582 -1.226780261215 52 30 24 N 001 13 36 W Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Kevin Trott
Project director/manager	Kevin Trott
Project supervisor	Steve Jones
Type of sponsor/funding body	Private Client

### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Physical Archive ID	X.A8.2014
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Digital Archive ID	X.A8.2014
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service

Paper Archive ID	X.A8.2014
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Drawing", "Plan", "Report", "Unpublished Text"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	The Gables, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire: An Archaeological Observation
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