

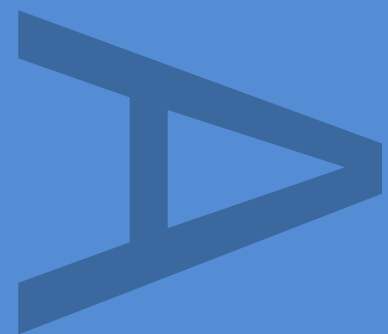
ASH HOUSE,
MAIN STREET, LEIRE,
LEICESTERSHIRE



AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
OBSERVATION



July 2016



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY
R12457

**ASH HOUSE, MAIN STREET, LEIRE, LEICESTERSHIRE:
REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION**

Local Planning Authority: Harborough District Council

Central National Grid Reference: SP 52443 90210

PCA Site Code: AHLL15

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July 2016

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PCA REPORT NUMBER: R12547

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Abstract

An archaeological observation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on land Ash House, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire during the groundworks for the footings of a new house. The observation was commissioned by Cheriton Homes Ltd. During the observation only a single archaeological feature was encountered in the development area. This consisted of a linear ditch containing animal bone but holding no identifiable datable or palaeoenvironmental material. A subsoil layer containing late 19th century occupational material produced a deposit of shell that was analysed. The results concluded it was a discarded nest complete with well-developed eggs containing chicks. Additionally, a layer of late post-medieval/modern material was noted to the west of the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Pre-construct Archaeology Ltd were commissioned Cheriton Homes Ltd, to undertake an archaeological Watching Brief at land at Ash House, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire. The programme of archaeological works is based on the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which followed discussions with the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council, Teresa Hawtin (Brook 2016).

1.1.2 The following report contains the archaeological record from this archaeological observation.

1.2 Site Location and Description

1.2.1 The development site is situated within the grounds of Ash House which is located on the west side of Main Street c.82m north of its junction with Back Lane. The site is bound to the south by various domestic properties, including The Gables & The Hatchery, all accessed off Main Street. To the north is a further property, consisting of a domestic dwelling and formal gardens. Back Lane bounds the site to the west and to the east is Ash House fronting Main Street. The site lies within the central core of Leire and covers an area of approximately 963m² centred at NGR SP 52443 90210.

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, bushes and the occasional shed. To the north is the garden of a domestic property; to the south is a newly erected dwelling and to the West is Main Street with Back Lane to the East. A spot height taken centrally within the site at 110.27 AOD.

1.3.2 The site is characterised by the bedrock formation of Mercia Mudstone Group sedimentary bedrock formed during Triassic periods, when the local environment was dominated by hot desert. The overlying superficial deposits are Bosworth Clay Member – clay & silt, formed during the Quaternary period, when the local environment was dominated by ice age conditions. (British geological Survey 2016).

1.3.3 These superficial deposits were encountered in the area of the building footings as a mid-orangey brown slightly sandy clay >0.7m deep (context **03**) and also as a mid-red brown sand >0.9m deep (context **04**).

1.4 Historical and Archaeological Background

1.4.1 Since the historical and archaeological background has already been discussed in detail prior to this report, a summary based on the Written Scheme of Investigation (Brook 2016) will follow. The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows 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 to takes 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 mention 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 Evidence for the medieval settlement was encountered during an archaeological evaluation (MLE17038) at the Old Rectory c. 243m to the south east of Ash House. A small assemblage of prehistoric flint tools was recovered during Fieldwalking in fields to the west of Back Lane (MLE18651). The assemblage included blades, a microlith, scraper and hammer stone. The Fieldwalking also recovered fifty-nine sherds of Roman pottery dating from the 2nd to 4th century and a single fragment of Roman tile (MLE 9177).
- 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. An archaeological observation undertaken at The Old Manor c.96 to the south east located several post-medieval and modern pits (MEL17585). In 2015 PCA carried out an archaeological observation during the construction of the new dwelling immediately south of the site, two residual fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from post-medieval occupation layers along with fragments of 18th century pottery. A possible post-medieval track was also identified.
- 1.4.5 Within the ground of the Gables is the Hatchery, an 18th / 19th 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 six Grade II listed property's within 250m of the site, all front Main Street. The oldest is The Old Manor (MEL11007) a timber framed building with brick infill and thatch, dating from the 17th/18th century. The closest being the early 19th century brick built ancillary building known as The Hatchery (MEL18828), located immediately southeast of the development site. There are two late 18th 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. Finally, Western House with its Flemish bond brickwork was built in the early 19th 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 Between 22nd and 26th of February 2016, archaeological supervision took place during the excavation of footings required in the preparation of land for the construction of a house at land at Ash House, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire (**Plate 1**).
- 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 Leicestershire, 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

- 3.2.1 Historic England's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (Historic England 2015) was used as the framework for post-excavation work.
- 3.2.2 Only late post-medieval/modern material was recovered from the fieldwork phase and this has been discarded after recording (see **Appendices 2-6**). However, 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 Five context numbers were allocated to layers whilst a single number was given to the cut of a feature, this feature in turn had a single fill which was allocated its own context number. The seven distinct contexts observed during the works are presented in **Appendix 1**.

4 THE RESULTS

4.1 The Archaeological Sequence

- 4.1.1 Only a single archaeological feature was identified within the development footprint during the observation. This consisted of a large linear ditch running on a North-South alignment across the site. The ditch measured approximately 2.42m wide and 1.02m deep with moderately sloped sides and a flat/slightly sloping base (context number **06**). The ditch had a single fill consisting of firm, mid orangey grey sandy clay that held occasional small, sub-rounded stones, occasional charcoal flecks and occasional animal bones (context **07**). The bone assemblage consisted of 22 pieces of animal bone. The bone elements recovered consisted of 17 small unidentified fragments; a snapped cattle femur, 1st phalange & metatarsal as well as two pelvis fragments. The fragmented nature of this bone assemblage indicated the bone elements were broken to extract the marrow (**Appendix 5**). An environmental sample was processed from this ditch fill but was negative for any charred macrofossils apart from a few very small unidentifiable charcoal 'flecks' (**Appendix 6**).
- 4.1.2 Although, not within the development footprint itself, to the west of the site, a potential dumping/demolition layer was identified adjacent to the gate access at the rear of the property. The layer was approximately 0.14m deep and consisted of a loose mid-grey brown gravelly silt with frequent brick, concrete and occasional pottery fragments (context **05**). The brick was dated to the mid-19th to mid-20th century (**Appendix 3**) and the pottery dated to the mid-19th to mid-20th century however the condition of the material suggests it is unlikely to represent primary deposition (**Appendix 2**). This layer has been interpreted as a probable dumping layer to stabilise the ground at the gate entrance but may also represent a post-medieval demolition layer.

4.2 Additional Deposits

- 4.2.1 A topsoil consisting of friable dark grey brown sandy silt formed the surface layer on the site and held occasional small sub-angular stones and occasional tree roots (context **01**). Beneath the topsoil lay a mid-orangey grey subsoil consisting of slightly clayey sandy silt (context **02**). The subsoil held pottery fragments dating from the mid-19th to mid-20th century; again, the condition of this pottery suggests that it is unlikely to represent primary deposition (see **Appendix 2**). In addition to the ceramic material, the shoulder from a clear glass bottle of late 20th century date was recovered from this layer (**Appendix 4**). An environmental sample was taken from an area containing a concentration of shell within this layer. The sample concluded that this potentially represented the remains of a single bird's nest which was disturbed shortly after hatching or as the chicks were already developed within the eggs (**Appendix 6**).

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The observation fulfilled the aims and objectives of monitoring the footings for the building and associated access.
- 5.2 Natural deposits recorded on the site were the clay and sand discussed earlier with reference to the British Geological Survey.
- 5.3 No clear evidence of any Prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon or medieval activity was identified on this site.
- 5.4 The only significant archaeological feature identified during the development was an undated linear feature, containing animal bone, which was identified running on a N-S alignment across the site.
- 5.5 In addition, some late post-medieval and modern material was recovered from the subsoil (context **02**) and from a possible packing/demolition layer on the western edge of the development site (context **05**).

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<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> accessed 19/02/2016

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pre-construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Anthony Construction Ltd for commissioning the work on behalf of Mr Hornsby. The watching brief was carried out by the author and by Steve Jones of PCA Midlands. Project management undertaken by Kevin Trott of PCA Midlands. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by Hayley Baxter and Josephine Brown of PCA's CAD department.

PLATES



Plate 1: East facing shot across house footings area.



Plate 2: South facing shot of Section 1 – showing contexts 01, 02 and 03.



Plate 3: North facing shot of Section 2 – showing contexts **01**, **02**, **03** and **04**.



Plate 4: West facing shot of Section 3 – showing contexts **02** and **03**.



Plate 5: Northeast facing shot of Section 4 – showing contexts **01**, **02**, **03** and **04**.



Plate 6: North facing shot of Section 4, including ditch [06] – showing contexts 02, 03, 04, [06] and (07).



Plate 7: North facing shot of Section 6, including ditch [06] – showing contexts 02, 03, [06] and (07).

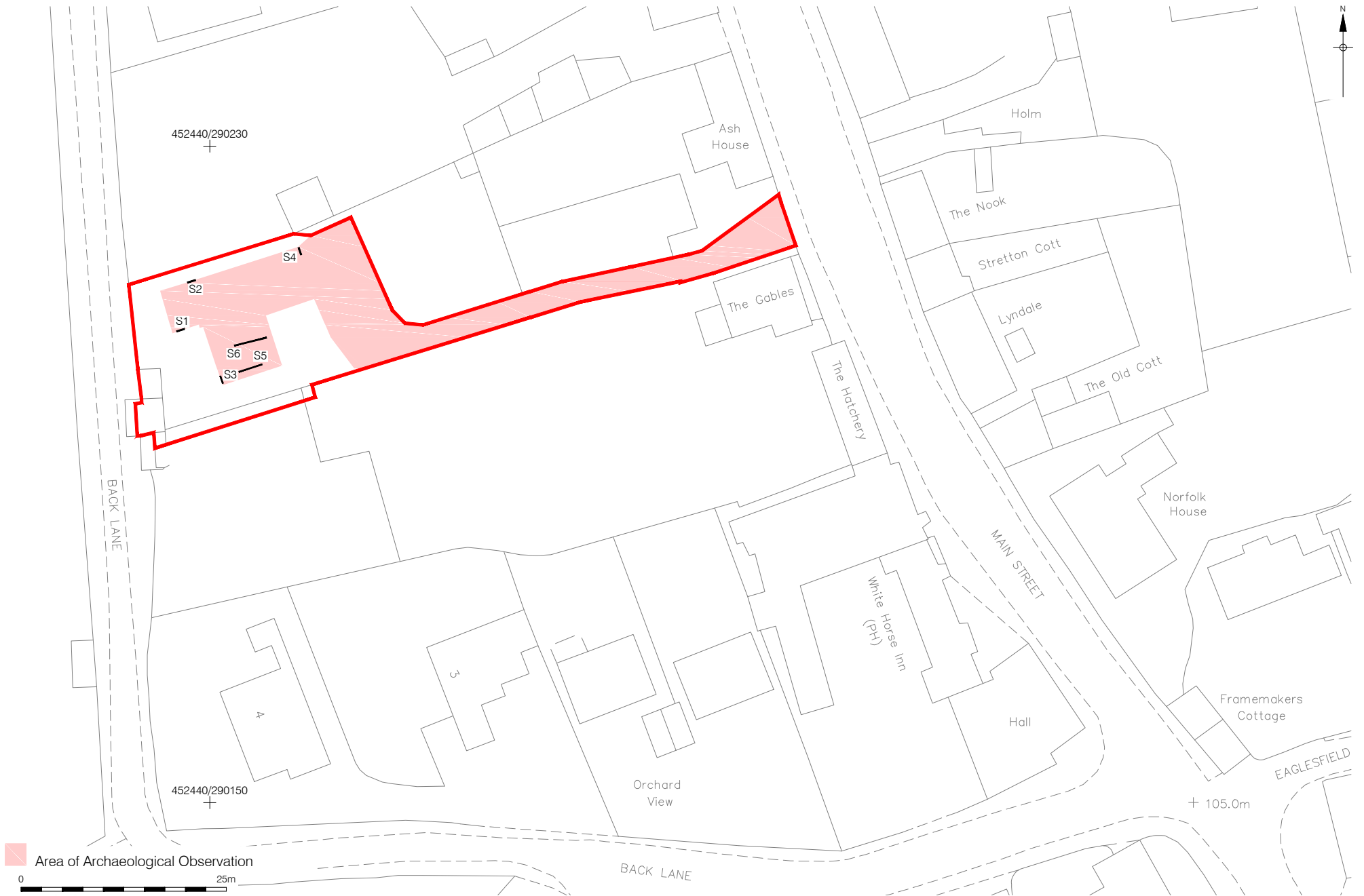
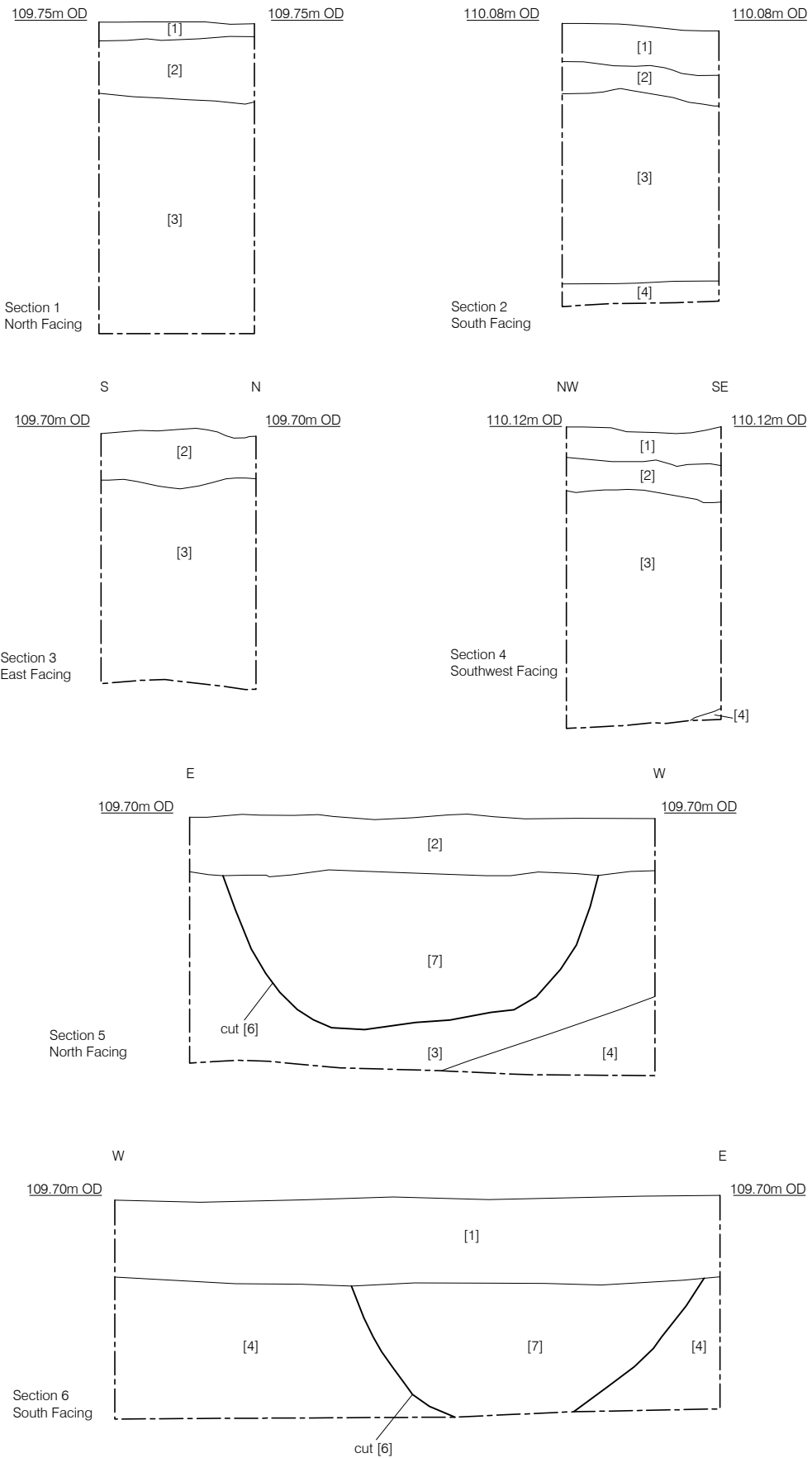


Figure 2
 Location of Areas Monitored
 1:625 at A4



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)	Above	Below
		Colour	Texture	Inclusions				
01	Layer	Dark grey brown	Moderately loose sandy silt	Occasional small sub-angular stones occasional tree rots	Topsoil	c.0.20-0.30m deep	02	
02	Layer	Mid orangey grey	Friable slightly clayey sandy silt	Occasional brick; occasional pottery fragments; occasional shells	Subsoil	c.0.20-0.30m deep	03	01
03	Layer	Mid orangey brown	Firm slightly sandy clay	Very occasional small/medium sub-rounded stones; occasional manganese	Natural ground	>0.70m deep		02
04	Layer	Mid Red brown	Loose sand	-	Natural sand	>0.9m deep		03
05	Layer	Mid grey brown	Loose gravelly silt	Frequent brick; occasional pottery fragments	Packing layer at rear gate entrance to site/possible demo or occupation layer		04	

06	Cut	Linear cut with moderate sides and flat/slightly sloping			Cut of ditch	2.42m wide; 1.02m deep	03	07
07	Fill	Mid slightly orangey grey	Firm slightly sandy clay	Occasional small, sub-rounded stones; occasional bones	Fill of ditch [06]	2.42m wide; 1.02m deep	06	02

APPENDIX 2: POTTERY REPORT

By Jane Young

Introduction

In total, eight sherds of pottery were submitted for examination. The pottery recovered comes from four vessels of early modern date. The assemblage was quantified by three measures: number of sherds, weight and vessel/CBM count within each context. Reference has been made to the Leicestershire Pottery Type Series held at Leicester University (see Davies and Sawday 1999). The ceramic data was entered on an Access database using Lincolnshire (see Young *et al.*) fabric codenames with a concordance with Leicestershire codenames (see Table 1). Recording of the assemblage was in accordance with the guidelines laid out in Slowikowski, *et al.* (2001).

Condition

The material is in a variable condition with most fragments being in a slightly abraded but stable condition.

Overall Chronology and Source

A range of four pottery types was identified; the type and general date range for these fabrics are shown in Table 1. The material is entirely of early modern type and was recovered from two deposits.

Table 1: Ceramic codenames and date ranges with total quantities by sherd count

Leicestershire codename	Lincolnshire codename	Full name	Earliest date	Latest date	Total sherds	Total vessels
EA	NCBW	19th-century Buff ware	1800	2000	1	1
EA10	WHITE	Modern Whiteware	1850	2000	1	1
PO	ENPO	English Porcelain	1760	2000	1	1
SW	ENGS	Unspecified English Stoneware	1750	1950	5	1

The Pottery

All of the pottery was recovered from subsoil layer **02** or layer **05**. The base of a large White Earthenware (WHITE) open vessel of mid-19th to mid-20th century date was recovered from layer **05**. Subsoil layer **02** produced five sherds from a single large English Stoneware (ENGS) side-handled jar or casserole dish with machine roller-stamped decoration. This vessel is of mid-19th to mid-20th century date. Also in this layer were a small conical Nineteenth Century Buff ware (NCBW) jar of 19th to mid-20th century type and the base of a small oval Porcelain dish (ENPO) of similar date.

Summary and Recommendations

The ceramic material recovered from this site suggests that there had been early modern 19th to 20th century activity in the area. The condition of the material suggests that it is unlikely to represent primary deposition.

The assemblage has been discarded.

References

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Slowikowski, A. Nenck, B. and Pearce, J. 2001. *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics*. Medieval Pottery Research Group, Occasional Paper 2.

Young, J, Vince A G and Nailor V 2005 *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Pottery from Lincoln*, Lincoln Archaeology Studies 7, Oxbow, Oxford

APPENDIX 3: CBM REPORT

By Zoe Tomlinson

Introduction

Four pieces of ceramic building material and a piece of modern concrete tile weighing 576grams in total were presented for examination. The assemblage has been catalogued and quantified by fragment count and weight, and dated. The material was examined visually and then recorded using codenames. The material has been recorded to site fabric level with a single fabric being identified. The resulting archive was then recorded on an Access database and complies with the guidelines laid out in Slowikowski, et al. (2001) and the Archaeological Ceramic Building Materials Group (2001).

The material is from a single deposit (05) and is in a fair condition. The fragments vary in size from substantial pieces of brick to small flakes. **Table 1** shows the CBM from the site and suggests a likely date range.

Table 1: Quantification of Ceramic Building Material

Codename	Full name	Total fragments	Total bricks or tiles	Total weight in grams	Suggested date
BRK	Brick	4	2	563	Mid 19th to mid 20th
MISC	Unidentified types (concrete tile)	1	1	13	Late 19th to 20th

The material

Three pieces from a single brick in a coarse light orange fabric containing common coarse calcareous inclusions is of early modern extruded type. The brick is 78mm thick and dates to between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries. A second brick in the same fabric is represented by a vitrified fragment with a thick purple-brown glaze. Such bricks are often referred to as 'engineering bricks' and were used both in building construction and for paving. A revival in the late 19th century of using diaper work in buildings led to an increase in production of these very highly fired bricks. A small fragment is from a moulded concrete flat roof tile.

Conclusion.

This small assemblage includes brick fragments that date to between the mid-19th century and the mid-20th century and a piece of modern concrete flat roof tile. The material has been discarded with full record.

References

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Slowikowski, A. Nenk, B and Pearce, J. 2001. Minimum Standards for Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics. *Medieval Pottery Research Group, Occasional Paper 2*. 2001

APPENDIX 4: GLASS REPORT

By Kevin Trott

Introduction

During the archaeological investigations a single fragment of clear vessel glass (15 grams) was recovered from the subsoil deposit (02). The fragment of glass consisted of upper side curved wall from a clear cosmetic bottle of later 20th century date.

Discussion

The glass recovered from Ash House, Leire is from a later 20th century cosmetic bottle that has little abrasion suggesting it has not been subject to re-distribution/disturbance from across the site.

Recommendations

No further analysis is recommended on the glass fragment as it is in a stable condition and no conservation is required (Graham Morgan Pers, Comm.). It is recommended that the glass is discarded.

APPENDIX 5: BONE REPORT

By Kevin Trott & Kevin Reilly

Introduction and Methodology

A small assemblage of 22 animal bone pieces (246 grams) were recovered from the fill (07) that of an undated linear ditch [06]. The animal bone was recorded to species/taxonomic category where possible and to size class in the case of unidentifiable bones such as ribs, fragments of long bone shaft and the majority of vertebra fragments. Recording follows the established techniques whereby details of the element, species, bone portion, state of fusion, wear of the dentition, anatomical measurements and taphonomic including natural and anthropogenic modifications to the bone were registered.

Description of faunal assemblage by phase

The bone was taken from the fill (07) of an undated linear ditch [06]. The bone elements recovered consisted of 17 small unidentified fragments; a snapped cattle femur, 1st phalange & metatarsal as well as two pelvis fragments. The fragmented nature of this bone assemblage indicated the bone elements were broken to extract the marrow.

Conclusion and recommendations for further work

While in relatively good condition, the potential value of this limited assemblage is severely hampered by the quantity of bones recovered. The available information clearly suggests the consumption of cattle on the site.

In conclusion, the bone can provide some basic information concerning animal usage within this part of Leicestershire. However, a significantly greater quantity of bones would be required to produce a better and more thorough understanding of this usage. Considering this assemblage was recovered during the limited watching brief works it would be recommended that any future animal bone assemblages recovered during archaeological work in the village would enable a better understanding of animal husbandry in Leire.

APPENDIX 6: ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLE REPORT

By Val Fryer

Introduction and method statement

Excavations at Leire, undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology, recorded a limited number of contexts, all of which appeared to be eighteenth century or later in date. Two samples for the retrieval of the plant macrofossils and other remains was taken from a ditch fill [07] and a sandy subsoil layer [02], which was seen to contain a very high density of shell fragments.

The samples were gently washed in a 300 micron mesh sieve in order to maintain the integrity of the material. The washed material was air dried prior to sorting under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16. All remains noted are listed below in Table 1. Occasional modern roots were noted within the sample.

Results

The assemblage from the ditch fill [07] was entirely blank, containing only small 'flecks' of charcoal and modern root. The sample from layer [02] is almost entirely composed of small fragments of avian eggshell. Other remains include numerous small bones/bone fragments, all of which have a very distinctive porous surface structure, possibly indicating that they are from immature specimens of bird, small mammal or amphibian. Other remains occur infrequently, but do include small pieces of coal, small pellets of burnt or fired clay and a small fragment of iron. Plant macrofossils are exceedingly scarce. However, a small number of highly abraded charcoal/charred wood fragments are recorded along with two possible fragmentary charred cereal grains.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In summary, this assemblage is somewhat unusual in one sealed ditch sample was so sterile and the general layer contained information that it is the product of a single event. Although bone identification will be required to verify the hypothesis, it is suggested that the material may be the remains of a single nest, which was disturbed either soon after hatching or as the chicks were already well developed within the eggs.

With the exception of bone identification, no further analysis of this assemblage is recommended.

Sample No.	1	2	
Context No.	02	07	
Cereal indet. (grains)	xfg	-	Key to Table:
Charcoal<2mm	x	x	x = 1 – 10 specimens
Bone	x	-	xxx = 51 – 100 specimens
Small bones	xxx	-	xxxx = 100+ specimens
Burnt/fired clay	x	-	fg = fragment
Eggshell	xxxx	-	

Ferrous frag.	X	-
Small coal frags.	X	-
Sample volume (litres)	c. 0.3	c.0.3
Volume of flot (litres)	0.1	0.1
% flot sorted	100%	100%

Table 1: Plant macrofossils and other remains from Ash Houe, Leire, Leicestershire

APPENDIX 7: OASIS SHEET

OASIS ID: preconst1-257092

Project details

Project name	ASH HOUSE, MAIN STREET, LEIRE
Short description of the project	An archaeological observation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on land Ash House, Main Street, Leire, Leicestershire during the groundworks for the footings of a new house. The observation was commissioned by Cheriton Homes Ltd. During the observation only a single archaeological feature was encountered in the development area. This consisted of a linear ditch containing animal bone but holding no identifiable datable or palaeoenvironmental material. A subsoil layer containing late 19th century occupational material produced a deposit of shell that was analysed. The results concluded it was a discarded nest complete with well-developed eggs containing chicks. Additionally, a layer of late post-medieval/modern material was noted to the west of the site.
Project dates	Start: 01-12-2015 End: 08-07-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	AHLL15 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Recorded Observation"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	LEICESTERSHIRE HARBOROUGH LEIRE ASH HOUSE, MAIN STREET, LEIRE, LEICESTERSHIRE
Study area	963 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 52443 90210 52.506893092182 -1.227249685259 52 30 24 N 001 13 38 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	Kathryn Brook
Project director/manager	Kevin Trott
Project supervisor	Steve Jones

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Physical Archive ID	X.A29.2016
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Glass"
Digital Archive recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Digital Archive ID	X.A29.2016
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Paper Archive ID	X.A29.2016

Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Diary", "Drawing", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

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