

Archaeological observation at
Narborough House, 14 Leicester Road,
Narborough, Leicestershire

Elizabeth Pratt and Caroline Rann



Report 0821

July 2009

Archaeological observation at Narborough House, 14 Leicester Road, Narborough, Leicestershire

Elizabeth Pratt and Caroline Rann

Contents

Summary

1. Introduction
2. Location
3. Archaeological and Historical background
4. Observation
5. Conclusions

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

Appendix A: List of Finds

Appendix B: List of Contexts

Appendix C: Archive Index

Report 0821
July 2009

Warwickshire Museum Field Services
The Butts
Warwick
CV34 4SS

List of Figures

Cover: Rear of property, looking south

Fig. 1: Site location

Fig. 2: Listed Buildings

Fig. 3: Detail from First Edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1886

Fig. 4: Site plan

Fig. 5: Section drawings

Fig. 6: Area observed, looking north-west

Fig. 7: Cobbled surface, looking south-east

Fig. 8: Pit 29, looking south-east

Fig. 9: Pits 23 and 25, looking south-east

Fig. 10: Pits 25 and 27, looking south-west

Fig. 11: Pit 20, looking south-east

Fig. 12: Posthole 9, looking south

Fig. 13: Pit 25, looking south-east

Fig. 14: Path 4, looking north-east

Fig. 15: Soakaway 15, looking south

Summary

Archaeological observation at Narborough House, 14 Leicester Road, Narborough, Leicestershire revealed a medieval or post-medieval cobbled surface which went out of use by the late 17th or 18th century, several pits and postholes of a later post-medieval date, the remains of a 19th-century path and rubbish pit, and a drainage feature from the 20th century. Several residual sherds of medieval pottery were recovered but no medieval features were noted. A prehistoric retouched flint flake was also recovered from a post-medieval context.

1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Blaby District Council for the demolition of an existing garage, erection of a new double garage, and alterations to access, the driveway and retaining walls, at Narborough House, 14 Leicester Road, Narborough, Leicestershire (Planning Ref. 03/0704/1/PX). As the site lies within an area of archaeological potential, within the settlement core of the medieval and post-medieval village of Narborough, close to the church, it was considered that archaeological deposits might be disturbed during the work. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, comprising an archaeological watching brief during soil stripping and groundworks (services, landscaping, foundations etc), in accordance with a Brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority, was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in October 2007. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A195.2007. The Warwickshire Museum site code was NH07.

2. Location

2.1 The site is located on the eastern corner of Church Lane and Leicester Road at national grid reference SP 541 975 in the parish of Narborough (Fig. 1). The development site was previously garden and contained a brick garage which had been recently demolished.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Anglian Till, overlain by River Terrace deposits and glaciofluvial deposits (British Geological Survey 2004).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Evidence for prehistoric occupation in the vicinity is given by the discovery of a polished flint axe and flint flakes (Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record MLE 7132, Fig 1), uncovered during excavations c.1km north-west of Narborough House at the county asylum in 1904, and dating to the Neolithic period (4000 BC – 2500 BC). A Neolithic stone axe (HER MLE 7133) was also found during excavations at Red Hill School, which is located c.950m to the west of Narborough House.

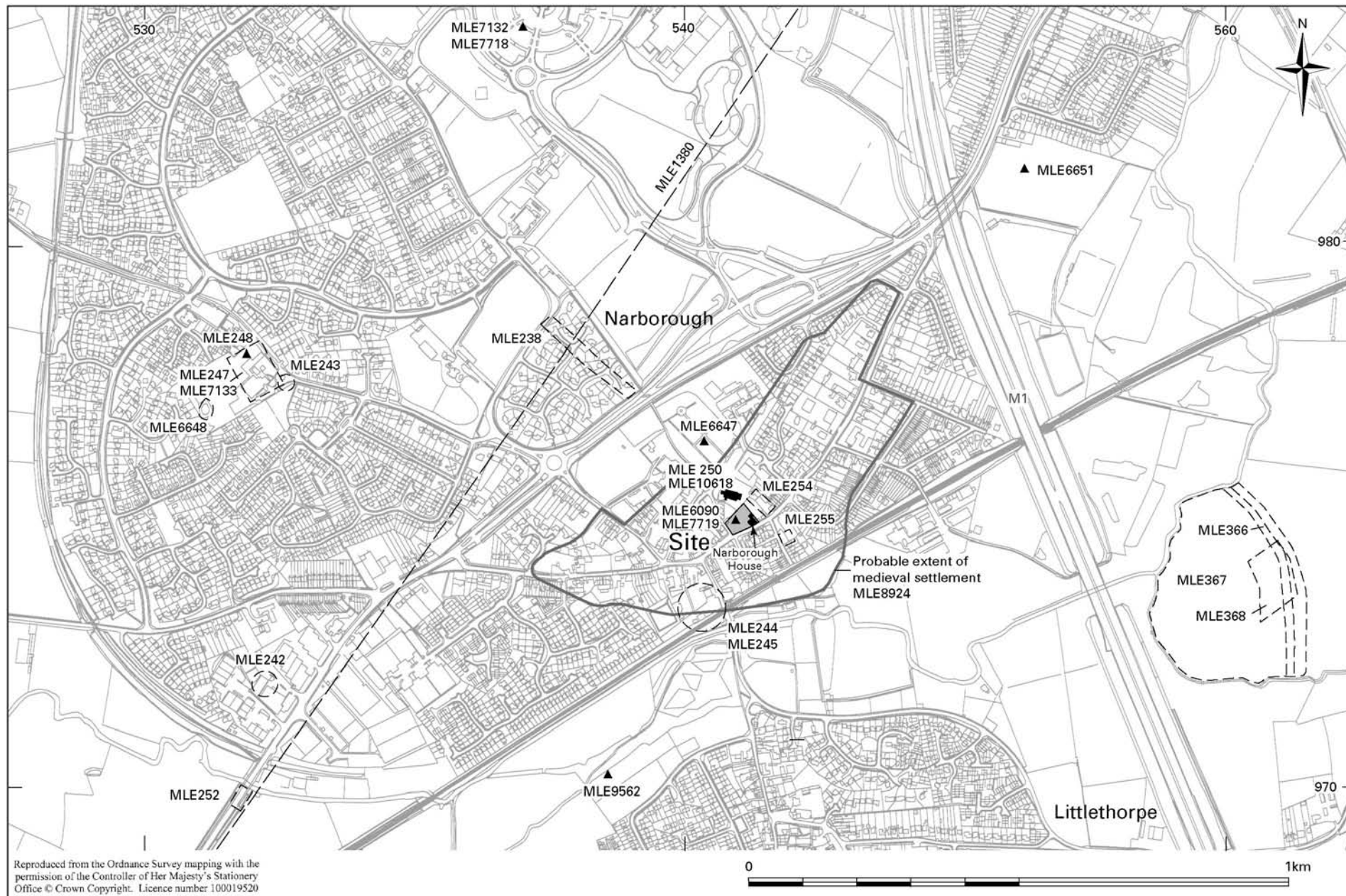


Fig. 1: Site location

3.2 Worked flint was found in the topsoil during an archaeological watching brief at a site c.500m to the south-west of Narborough House (HER MLE 9562), thought to date to either the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age (2800 BC –1500 BC). Two other watching briefs (not on Fig 1) in this area also recovered similarly dated flint, consisting of a piercer with possible scraper on the reverse (HER MLE 9563) and a further scraper (HER MLE 9564).

3.3 In 1911 excavations at the county asylum yielded a Roman (43 AD – 410 AD) bronze coin (HER MLE 7718). Another small bronze coin (HER MLE 7719), probably of Maximinus and dating to the 4th century, may have come from the garden at Narborough House itself; this is the only evidence to date of Romano-British activity in the historic core of Narborough, but does not suggest significant settlement. An excavation carried out in 1983 by Leicestershire Archaeological Unit during the construction of Red Hill School, 950m to the north-west of Narborough House, uncovered evidence of a possible Romano-British villa (HER MLE 247) and two bowl furnaces (HER MLE 248) used for smelting.

3.4 The Fosse Way (HER MLE 1380), a Roman road connecting Leicester with Lincoln, Cirencester and Exeter, runs through Narborough, to the north-west of the historic core. Its location and alignment was identified by archaeological excavation and geophysical survey in 2005. Subsequent investigations by the University of Leicester Archaeological Unit uncovered possible road surfaces and a 1st-century AD brooch.

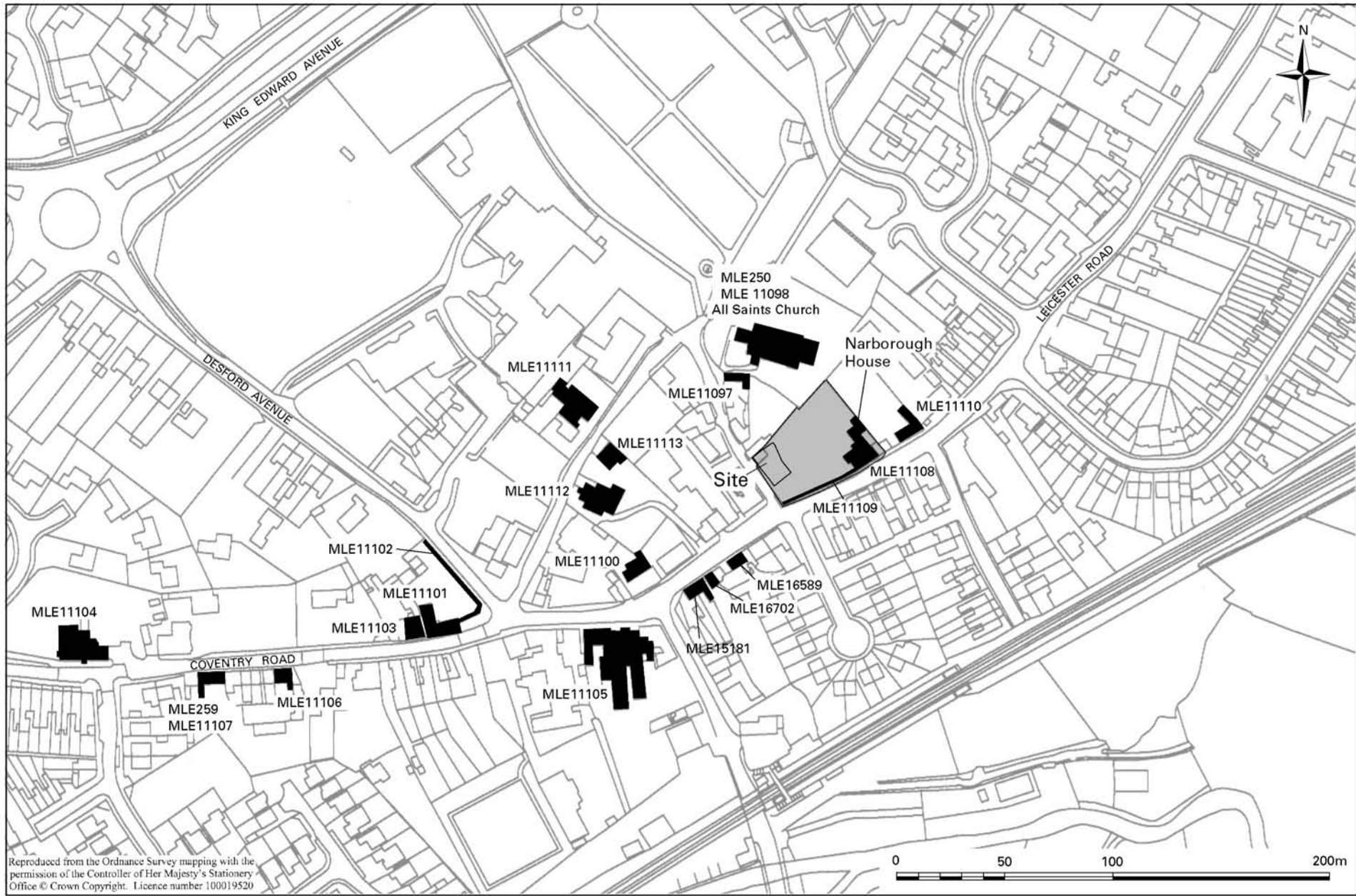
3.5 A double ditched boundary (HER MLE 366) cuts off the angle between the River Soar and Whetstone Brook, to the east of Narborough House. Such features can be later prehistoric in date; however Anglo-Saxon (400 AD – 850 AD) pottery found on the site suggests a later date. The ditch encloses a large area (HER MLE 367) in which are four rectangular enclosures and a possible ring ditch (HER MLE 368).

3.6 A hog-back tombstone (HER MLE 6090) of Anglo-Scandinavian character, dating to the 10th century was found in the garden at Narborough House. As the house is adjacent to the graveyard of the medieval church it is likely that it originally came from there. This suggests that there was a settlement in Narborough prior to the Norman Conquest. Although Narborough is not mentioned separately in Domesday (1086) it may have been included with the large settlement at Huncote (Nichols 1811, 813).

3.7 The first mention of a church in Narborough was in 1142, but the origins of the present All Saints' Church lie in the 15th-century (HER MLE 250). The chancel was rebuilt in 1883 by F. Bacon in the 13th-century style (HER MLE 11098). It is a Grade II Listed Building (LBS Number 188972) and is located to the immediate north of Narborough House.

3.8 Narborough House is at the centre of the probable extent of the medieval settlement of Narborough (HER MLE 8924). In 1219 Fulk Fitz Waryne was granted permission to hold a weekly market, probably in the Square (HER MLE 260), suggesting that the medieval settlement was thriving by this time.

3.9 Evidence for medieval activity in and around Narborough is plentiful. Langham Bridge, formerly consisting of a series of arches without a parapet but now rebuilt in reinforced concrete, was originally a medieval bridge and is located on the Fosse Way c.1km to the south-west of the site (HER MLE 252). An early medieval watermill, mentioned in 13th-century sources, is supposed to have once stood on a site to the west of the railway station (HER MLE 244). This is also the site of a later, post-medieval mill (HER MLE 245), 200m south-west of Narborough House. The



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Licence number 100019520

Fig. 2: Listed Buildings

medieval timber-framed construction of Bell View Cottages (HER MLE 254), just to the east of Narborough House, was discovered when they were demolished.

3.10 A hollow way (HER MLE 238), which once ran across King Edward Avenue north of Narborough House, may represent the medieval course of Forest Road. A granite floor of early post-medieval date was cut into one of the banks at the western end, but the whole length is now built upon. A stone-walled pound (HER MLE 255) once stood on Bell Street. The pound may have been medieval or post-medieval in date.

3.11 A number of medieval artefacts have been found. A bronze key (HER MLE 6647) dating to the 15th-century was uncovered in the graveyard of All Saints Church. Medieval pottery was found at a site 950m to the north-west (HER MLE 6648), and a fragment of a pilgrim's badge (HER MLE 6651) worn by a medieval pilgrim to the shrine of St James of Compostella in Spain, was discovered 800m north-west of Narborough House.

3.12 Narborough continued to develop throughout the post-medieval period. To the south-west is the site of a post-medieval windmill (HER MLE 242). Another post-medieval windmill site is located in the Copt Oak Road area to the north-west (HER MLE 243). A number of buildings of 16th/17th-century and later date survive, and are now Listed Buildings (Fig. 2). The two lower storeys of the Grade II Listed Ivy Cottage on Coventry Road were built c. 1600 (HER MLE 259, 11107). 17th-century Grade II Listed Buildings include 30 Coventry Road (HER MLE 11106), the Narborough Arms (MLE 11105), Narborough Hall (HER MLE 11104), and Corner House (MLE 11101) with an attached wall of unknown date (HER MLE 11102). Other Listed Buildings shown on Fig. 2 are 18th- or 19th-century.

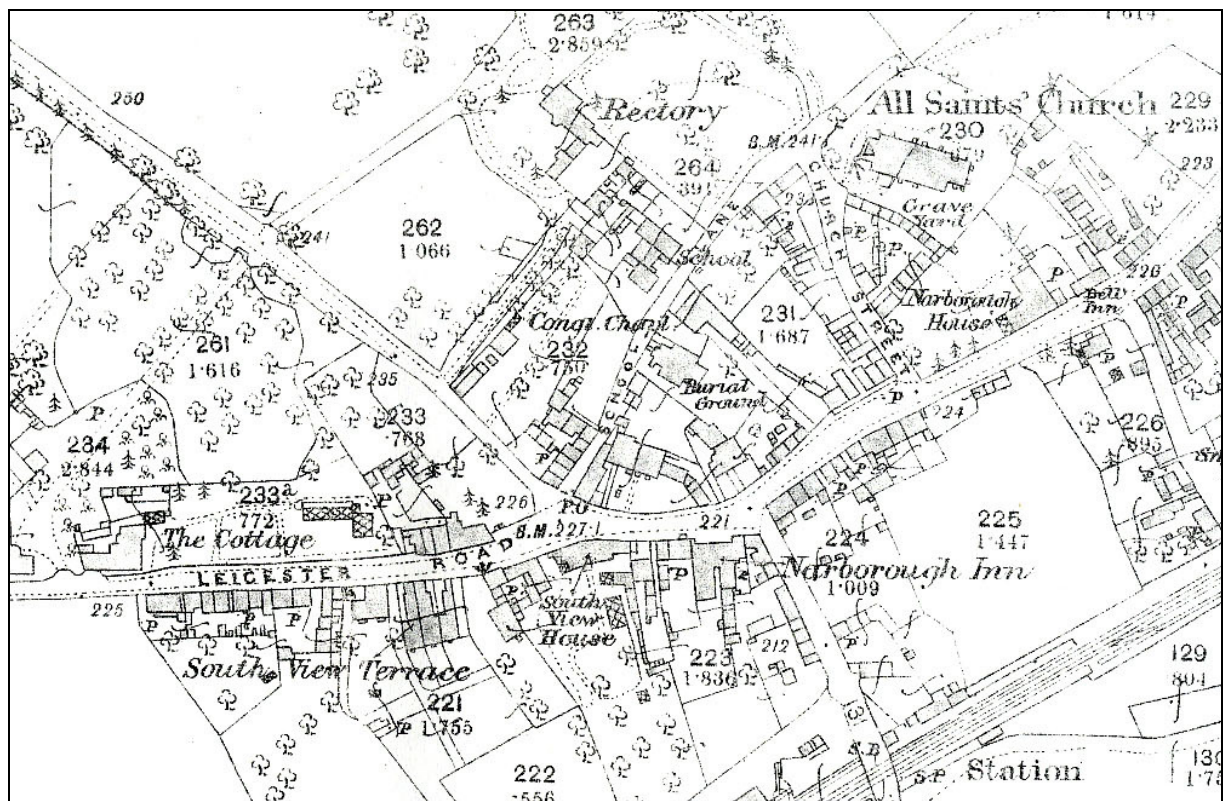


Fig. 3: Detail from First Edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1886

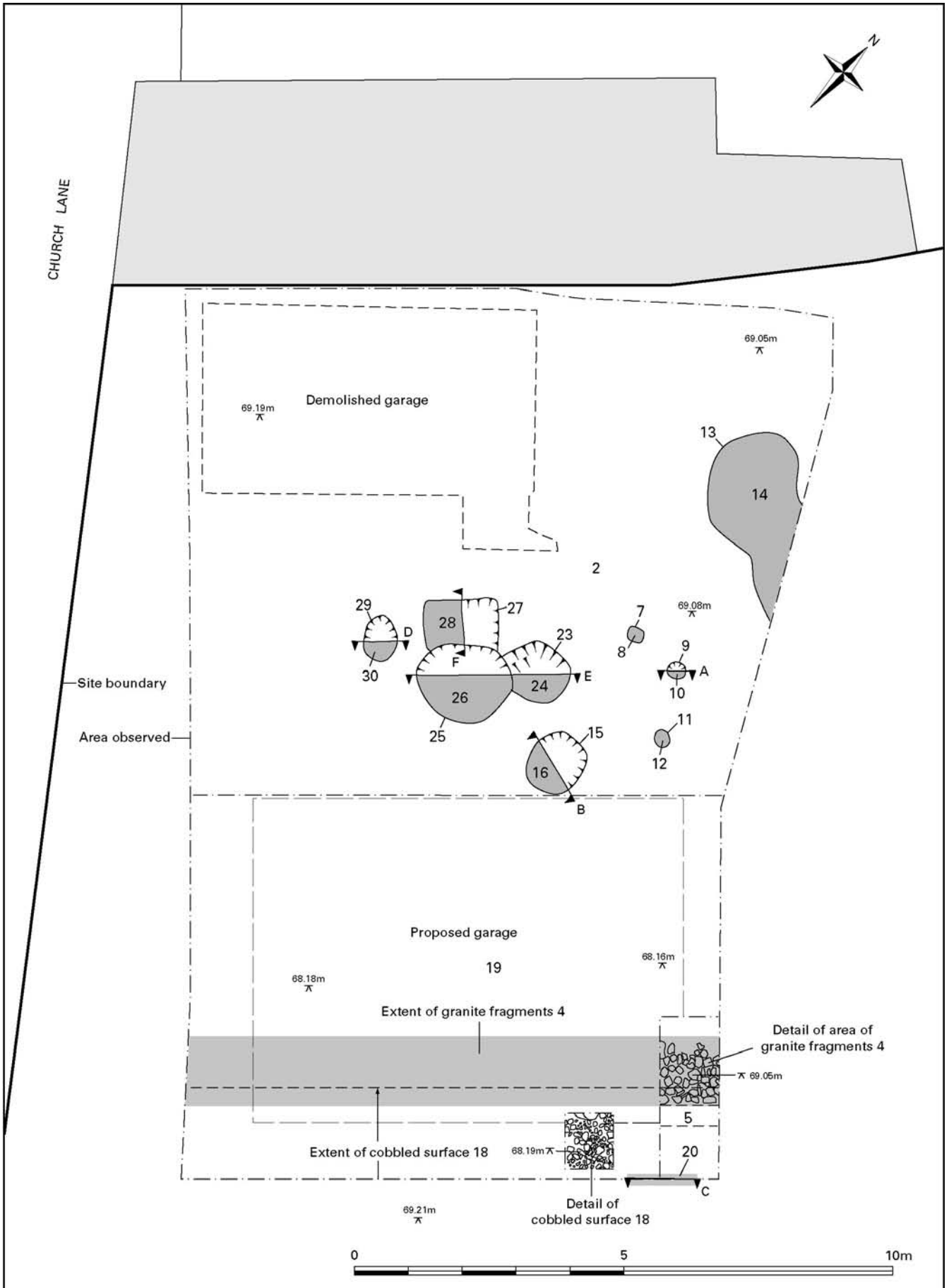


Fig. 4: Site plan

3.14 Narborough House (HER MLE 11108) is a Grade II Listed Building (Listed Building No. 188981). It is Georgian fronted, built in the late 18th century. The rear extension was added in 1869 and is inscribed with the monogram of John Grosvenor Young, the owner at that time. The extension is of red brick with traceried stone windows believed to have come from the demolition of local churches. The garden wall (HER MLE 11109) is of an unknown date but is also Grade II Listed.

3.15 The Ordnance Survey First Edition map of 1886 (Fig. 3), and subsequent Ordnance Survey maps of 1917 and 1938, show the property as it is today but with no outbuildings. The recently demolished garage was built in the late 20th century.

4. Observation

4.1 The brick garage in the north-western corner of the garden was demolished prior to ground works beginning. The ground was reduced in the area of the new garage and associated landscaping by 0.5m in the north, with a step down to c.1m in the south (Fig. 4). During this ground reduction geological natural of reddish brown sand and gravel (2) and yellowish brown clay (19) was encountered at a depth of 0.3m in the north of the site and c.1m at the southern end of the site (Fig. 6). This height difference represents the natural sloping aspect of the land.

4.2 After the removal of c.0.3m of topsoil, a small test pit was dug to establish the depth of the geological natural in the southern part of the site. In the pit the geological natural of yellowish brown clay (19) had cobbles pressed into it to form a surface, the earliest feature recorded (18, Fig. 7). The surface was subsequently found to extend across the width of the site, but extended only two metres northwards from the southern edge of excavation. Overlying the cobbled surface was a layer of brown sandy clay loam with occasional small rounded pebbles and frequent charcoal fragments (17). Of the ten sherds of pottery found in this layer, nine dated to the 17th/18th century with a residual medieval sherd. The cobbled surface could have been medieval in date, the residual sherd probably dating to the 14th century, although a post-medieval date is perhaps more likely, and is likely to have gone out of use in the late 17th or 18th century. Layer 17 was only evident covering the cobbled surface; it was not found further north.

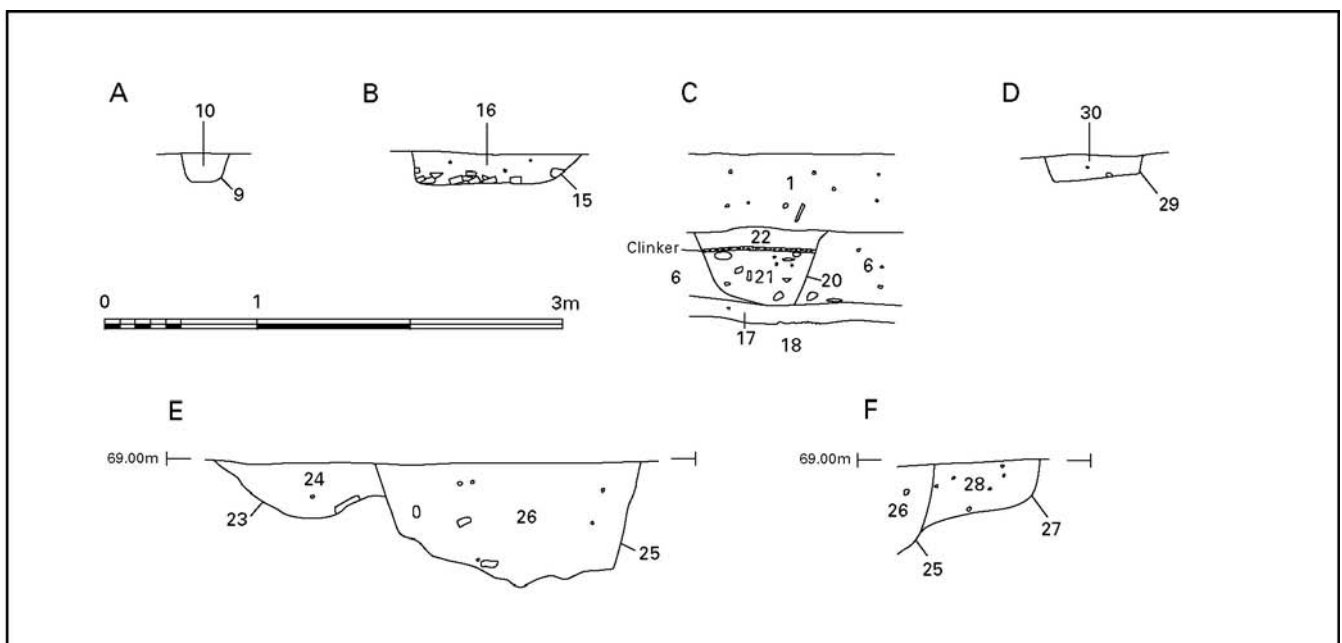


Fig. 5: Section drawings

4.3 Overlying layer 17 and the geological natural (2, 19) was a fairly light reddish brown silty sandy loam layer c.0.45m deep (6) containing a moderate amount of small rounded pebbles and sherds of coarsewares dating from the 17th to 19th centuries, probably a post-medieval garden soil. Layer 6 was absent in the very north of the site and was probably removed during the construction of the recently demolished garage. It may be a deposition of the spoil generated by the 1869 extension to the house, which cuts into the natural slope of the land.

4.4 After removal of loam layers 17 and 6 from the development area, three pits were found cutting the geological natural. Their relationship to the overlying layers could not be confirmed. A rounded pit (29) was 0.2m deep with steep sloping sides and a flattish base (Figs. 5D, 8). It was filled with a mottled brown clay loam and reddish-brown clay with occasional pebbles (30). Two undiagnostic fragments of brick or tile were found in the fill.

4.5 Irregular rounded pit 23 had moderately sloping sides and a rounded base, and was 0.35m deep (Figs. 5E, 9). The brown silty sandy loam fill (24) contained occasional small rounded pebbles and pottery dating to the late 18th century (Fig. 9).

4.6 A rectangular pit (27) had a steep-sided profile, an asymmetrical sloping base and was 0.35m deep (Figs. 5F, 10). The fill was a very dark brown silty sandy loam with occasional small rounded pebbles (28). A retouched prehistoric flint flake was found, but was certainly residual as there were brick fragments and clay pipe also within the fill.

4.7 An irregular shaped pit (25) was also found below loam layers 17 and 6; again the relationship with the layers could not be recorded but it cut pits 23 and 27 (Figs. 5E, F). In profile the pit had steep sloping sides and an irregular base, probably due to disturbance by animal burrowing (Fig. 13). It was filled with a dark brown silty loam with moderate small rounded pebbles (26). Late 18th-century pottery sherds from the fill are very similar in date to those in pit 23, although the dating of others could extend into the 19th century. Sherds of residual 13th- to 15th-century pottery were also found, along with a large boulder of granitic rock (Fig. 10).

4.8 At the south-eastern edge of the excavation a small steep-sided pit or linear feature (20) was revealed in the section, cut into layer 6 (Fig. 5C, 11). It had a lower fill of mortar, broken bricks, small rounded pebbles and slate, capped with a layer of clinker (21). Bottle glass, which was 18th/19th-century in date, and oyster shell were found within this fill. The upper fill (22) was a reddish-brown silty sandy loam with occasional small rounded pebbles. The feature was probably a rubbish pit.



Fig. 6: Area observed, looking north-west



Fig. 7: Cobbled surface, looking south-east



Fig. 8: Pit 29, looking south-east



Fig. 11: Pit 20, looking south-east



Fig. 9: Pits 23 and 25, looking south-east



Fig. 12: Posthole 9, looking south



Fig. 10: Pits 25 and 27, looking south-west



Fig. 13: Pit 25, looking south-east



Fig. 14: Path 4, looking north-east



Fig. 15: Soakaway 15, looking south

4.9 Also cut through layer 6 were three postholes (7, 9, 11). Only posthole 9 was excavated (Fig. 9). It had straight sides and a flat base (Figs. 5A and 12) and was filled with a compact deposit of dark reddish-brown silty sandy loam with occasional small rounded pebbles (10). A probably residual sherd of post-medieval Midlands Purple pottery was found within it. Posthole 7 was sub-circular and was filled with a dark reddish-brown silty sandy loam with occasional rounded pebbles (8). Posthole 11 was also sub-circular and had a dark reddish-brown silty sandy loam fill (12) with small rounded pebbles.

4.10 A linear feature was revealed to the south of the site, overlying layer 6 (Fig. 14). It was c.1.2m wide, made up of unevenly shaped and sized granitic cobbles (4) and extended along the entire width of the excavated area parallel to the south-eastern side. This probably formed the make-up for a path running south-west to north-east. Overlying the layer of cobbles was a deposit of broken pottery and glass (3). The pottery dated to the 18th and 19th centuries and extended over the entire length of the cobbles; this also probably formed part of the make-up for the path and dates it to the 19th-century. There was a lighter deposit to the south of the feature, consisting of crushed mortar in a grey sandy loam matrix (5). This deposit seemed to be quite superficial as it disappeared as the excavations continued to the south-west and was no deeper than a few centimetres. Although a path seems more likely, the mortar could suggest that the feature may be demolition rubble from a former garden wall.

4.11 Covering the whole area was a fairly loosely compacted layer of very dark reddish-brown silty sandy loam topsoil (1) with moderate small rounded and angular pebbles. Occasional brick and tile fragments were noted in the topsoil (not retained). It was 0.2m deep in the north of the site and 0.5m in the south. The greater depth of topsoil in the south could be due to the deposition of spoil from the slight terracing of the land when the extension was built in 1869.

4.12 A 19th- or 20th-century pit (15), thought on excavation to be a soakaway but possibly a garden planting feature, was found cutting the topsoil. It was circular with steep sides and a flattish base (Figs. 5B, 15), and was filled with frequent broken bricks and cobbles in a dark reddish-brown sandy loam matrix (16). Pottery from the fill was 18th/19th-century in date.

4.13 Also cutting the topsoil was a irregular shaped feature (13). This was probably a modern rubbish pit and was not excavated because the very dark reddish-brown sandy loam fill (14) contained recently deposited medical debris. Two sherds of 18th/19th-century pottery were recovered from the top of the feature.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Although the retouched prehistoric flint flake and the number of residual medieval pottery sherds recovered point to earlier activity in the immediate vicinity, the cobbled surface (18) dating to the late 17th/18th century or earlier was the oldest feature found on the site. It may represent the rear yard of a property which fronted Leicester Road, as no evidence for an adjoining dwelling was found further north, or could be an early garden feature.

5.2 The majority of pits and postholes recorded were of late 18th-or 19th-century date and seem to indicate a spate of activity in this area of the garden after the construction of the current house. The linear deposit of granite fragments and pottery/glass (3/4) appears to be a 19th-century garden path.

5.3 The garden of the property is relatively flat, whereas the natural aspect of the land is sloping towards Leicester Road. The geological natural at the south-eastern area of the site is 0.7m lower than to the north. Some of the raising of the ground level could be due to the deposition of soil generated by the extension in 1869, which cuts into the slope.

Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Mr and Mrs McGrane for commissioning the work and the County Planning Archaeologist for preparing the brief. Work on site was carried out by Caroline Rann and John Harman. This report was written by Caroline Rann and Elizabeth Pratt with illustrations by Andy Isham. It was edited by Catherine Coutts, who also identified the pottery (with additional Leicestershire type series codes by Debbie Sawday), and checked by Ian Greig.

Bibliography

- British Geological Survey 2004 <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/leicester/>, accessed December 2007
- Nichols, J. 1811 *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, Vol. IV, part II Sparkenhoe Hundred*, London
- Ordnance Survey 1886 *First Edition 1:2500 map*, Leicestershire Sheet XXXIV.16
- Ordnance Survey 1917 *Second Edition 1:2500 map*, Leicestershire Sheet XXXIV.16
- Ordnance Survey 1938 *Revised Edition 1:2500 map*, Leicestershire Sheet XXXIV.16

Appendix A: List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Date of assemblage or sherd/Comments</i>
3	Pottery	73	18th- and 19th-century: 3 Mocha ware EA 13 Nottingham Stoneware ST 17 Transfer decorated whiteware EA10 2 Pearlware EAG 6 Modern glazed ware EA 4 Manganese mottled ware EA3 2 Midlands Blackware MB 1 Hand painted whiteware EA10 1 Lustreware EA 5 Blackware EA6 2 Sponge decorated whiteware EA10
3	Glass	9	Vessel glass
3	Iron	1	Nail
6	Pottery	16	17th- to 19th-century: 7 Midlands Purple MP 2 Midlands Blackware MB 1 Stoneware ST 5 Blackware EA6 1 Yellow glazed coarseware SW
6	Animal bone	2	Clear butchery marks on cattle rib
6	Clay pipe	4	Stems, 17th/18th century
6	Iron	1	Nail
10	Pottery	1	Midlands Purple 16th/17th-century
14	Pottery	2	18th/19th-century: 1 White salt glazed stoneware SW4 1 Blackware EA6
14	Animal bone	1	Tooth, cattle
16	Pottery	9	18th- to 19th-century: 1 Blackware EA6 1 Blue bodied glazed ware SW4 3 Transfer decorated whiteware EA10 4 Creamware, 1 cane patterned EA8
17	Pottery	10	17th/early 18th-century: 4 Midlands Blackware MB 4 Midlands Yellow MY 1 Manganese Mottled ware EA3 1 14th century, residual
	Animal bone	-	Very degraded frags, not retained
21	Glass	1	Bottle glass, 18th/19th-century
21	Oyster shell	2	

24	Pottery	17	late 18th-century: Creamware, White salt-glazed stoneware SW4 Blackware EA10
		3	
		1	
		12	
		1	14th- to 16th-century sherd
24	Glass	1	Bottle glass
24	Animal bone	1	
24	Oyster shell	1	
26	Pottery	26	18th- to 19th-century: White salt glazed Stoneware SW4 Slipware EA7 Creamware EA8 Nottingham Stoneware ST Blackware MB Pearlware EA9 13th-15th century sherds, residual
		2	
		2	
		3	
		1	
		13	
		1	
		4	
28	Flint	1	Retouched flake
28	Brick	1	
28	Clay pipe	1	Stem
28	Animal bone	4	Adjoining fragments of cattle long bone
30	Brick or tile	2	Fragments, highly abraded

* All post-medieval pottery was identified using the Warwickshire Museum reference collection and was checked by Dr Cathy Coutts. Type Series codes are those used for Leicestershire and Rutland; assistance with this was provided by Debbie Sawday. All medieval pottery is residual and has been given estimated dates.

Appendix B: List of Contexts

Context No. *Description*

1	Topsoil
2	Geological natural – sand and gravel (north of site)
3	Layer of broken pottery
4	Layer of cobbles
5	Layer of mortar
6	Layer of post-medieval ?garden soil
7	Posthole cut (post-medieval)
8	Fill of posthole 7
9	Posthole cut (post-medieval)
10	Fill of posthole 9
11	Posthole cut (post-medieval)
12	Fill of posthole 11
13	Pit cut (modern)
14	Fill of pit 13
15	Cut of 19th/20th-century pit
16	Fill of 15
17	Layer (post-medieval)
18	Cobbled surface
19	Geological natural – clay (south of site)
20	Pit or linear feature cut
21	Lower fill of 20
22	Upper fill of 20
23	Pit cut
24	Fill of 23
25	Pit cut
26	Fill of 25
27	Rectangular pit
28	Fill of 27
29	Pit
30	Fill of 29

Appendix C:- Archive Index

<i>Site Name/Parish</i>	Narborough House, Narborough	
<i>Acc No/Site Code</i>	X.A195.2007/NH07	
<i>Organisation</i>	Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group	
<i>Class number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>No</i>
1	Index to Archive	1
2	Introduction	1
A.1	Final Report	1
B.1	Site Data - Text: Field notes	2
B.2	Site Data – Primary Context Records	30
B.3	Site Data – Synthesised Context Records	none
B.4	Site Data – Site drawings	2
B.5	Site Data – Synthesised Drawings (Digital)	4 (on CD)
C.1	Finds Data – List of finds	1
C.2	Finds	1 box
D.1	Photographs – Index print of digital photos	1
D.2	Photographs – Digital photographs	20 (on CD)
D.3	Photographs – Black and White negatives (11)	1 sheet
D.4	Photographs – Black and White prints (11)	2 sheets
D.5	Photographs – Colour Slides (12)	1 sheet
E.1	Documentary - Developer's plans	3
E.2	Documentary – Sources	1
E.3	Documentary –Old Maps	10
E.4	Documentary - Notes	1
F.5	Correspondence – Planning Brief	7
F.6	Correspondence – Museum proposal	3
G.1	DIGITAL ARCHIVE ON CD <i>Report file (0821NH07.doc) Archive catalogue (NH07Arcind.doc), Digital Drawings (NH07 fig 1.pdf, NH07 fig 2.pdf, NH07 fig 4.pdf, NH07 fig 5.pdf) and Digital Photographs (NH07-01 –NH07-20.JPEG)</i>	1 CD