

Archaeological Observation between  
1 and 5 Flax Lane, Twycross,  
Leicestershire



Report 0814

April 2008

# Archaeological Observation between 1 and 5 Flax Lane, Twycross, Leicestershire

## Contents

- Summary
- 1. Introduction
- 2. Location
- 3. Archaeological and Historical Background
- 4. Observation of Groundworks
- 5. Conclusions
- Acknowledgements
- Bibliography
- Appendix A: List of Contexts
- Appendix B: Archive Summary Form

## List of Figures

Cover: Detail from 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1inch to 1 mile map of 1835

Fig. 1: Site Location

Fig. 2: Detail from tracing of the 1844 tithe map

Fig. 3: Detail from the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1903

Fig. 4: Areas Observed

Fig. 5: Driveway looking south-west

Fig. 6: Tank pit looking north-east with site of new house in background

Fig. 7: Foundation trenches looking north-west

Fig. 8: Foundation trenches looking south-east

Report 0814  
April 2008

Warwickshire Museum Field Services  
The Butts  
Warwick  
CV34 4SS

## Summary

Archaeological observation of the construction of a new bungalow between Nos 1 and 5 Flax Lane, within the probable extent of the medieval settlement of Twycross, recorded no evidence of significant archaeological activity. A single sherd of Romano-British pottery of probable 4th-century date was recovered, but this merely provides evidence for activity in the general vicinity and does not indicate a specific settlement site. No evidence for buildings on the street frontage was recovered, though such evidence may survive at a greater depth than that disturbed by the current development. A cultivation soil was identified towards the rear of the plot.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council for the construction of a new bungalow between 1 and 5 Flax Lane, Twycross, Leicestershire (Planning ref. 05/01065/FUL). The site of the development lies close to a concentration of Romano-British finds, and within the probable area of the medieval village of Twycross. It was considered that significant archaeological remains could thus be affected by the groundworks, and it was therefore recommended that a programme of archaeological fieldwork be undertaken as a condition of the planning permission.

1.2 A programme of archaeological fieldwork, in accordance with a Brief for Archaeological Work (June 2006) issued by the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist, was commissioned from Warwickshire Museum Field Services Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in August-October 2007. This report presents the results of that programme. The site archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire Museums Service under accession number X.A76.2007 (Warwickshire Museum site code FT07).

## 2. Location

2.1 The site is located on the south side of Flax Lane centred on National Grid Reference SK 3375 0474 (Fig. 1). Prior to the present development it formed the eastern part of the private garden of No 1 Flax Lane.

2.2 The underlying geology of the site is glacial boulder clay with sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 1953).

## 3. Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 A scatter of Romano-British greyware potsherds along with a Roman denarius has been recovered from a field immediately south of the current development (Leicestershire Historic Environment Record MLE 8397). Another Romano-British find, a rim sherd of a Derbyshire ware pottery jar, has been recovered from further to the east (HER MLE 8398) while the findspot of two Roman coins of the republican period has been recorded to the north of the village (HER MLE 9372). The finds indicate Romano-British activity in the area but do not necessarily indicate a settlement.

3.2 At the time of Domesday book (1087) Twycross had a population that can be estimated at around 90 people. The size of the village population had increased little

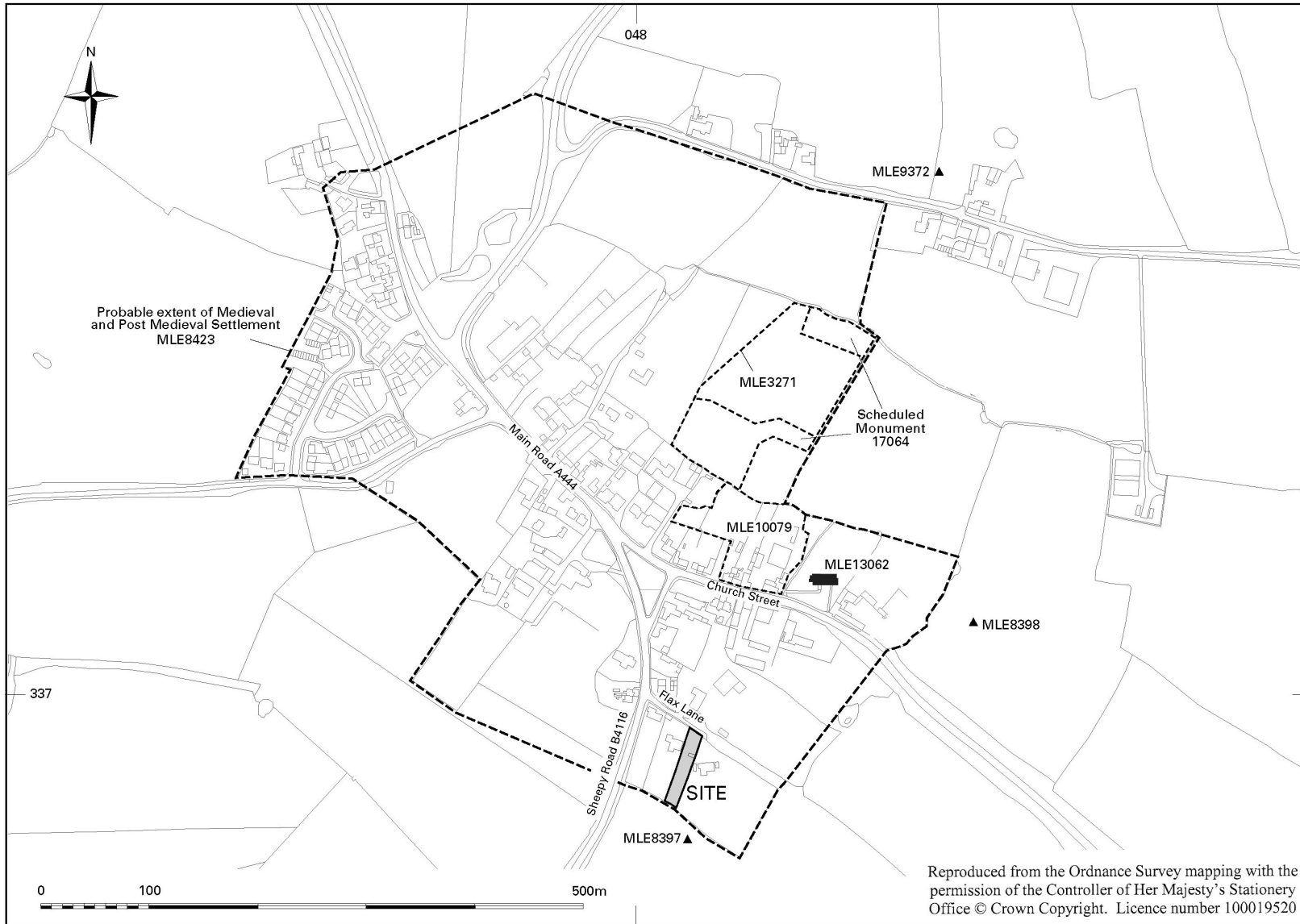


Fig. 1: Location

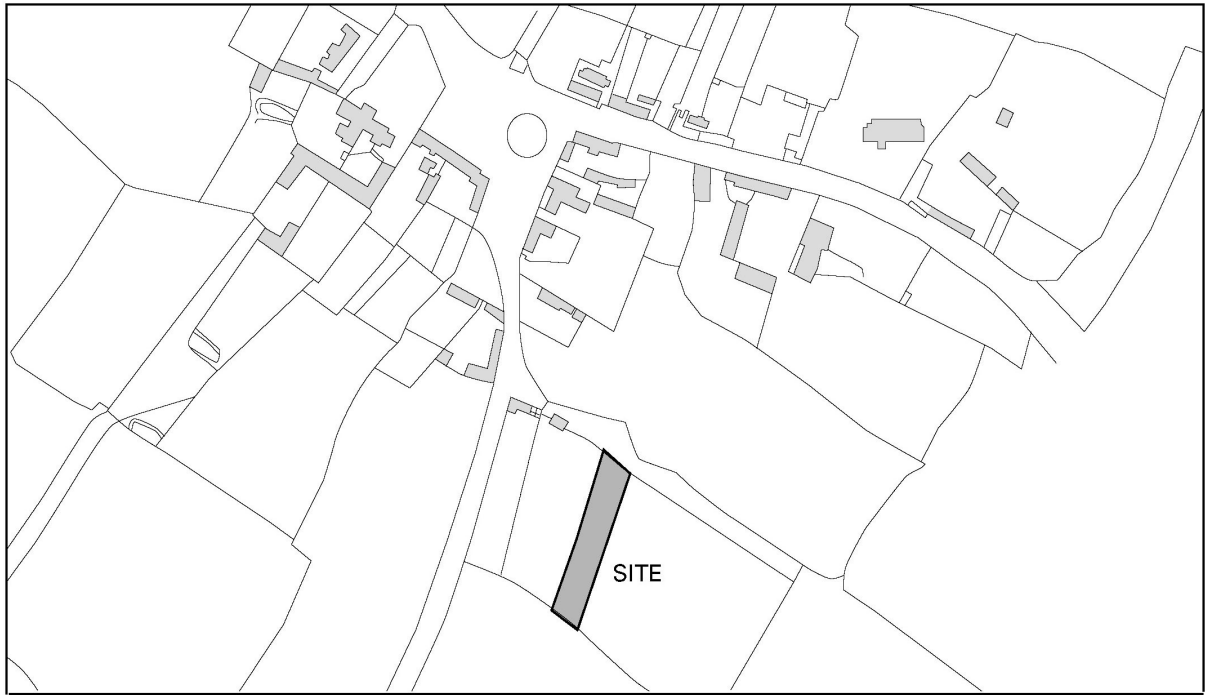


Fig. 2: Detail from tracing of the 1844 tithe map

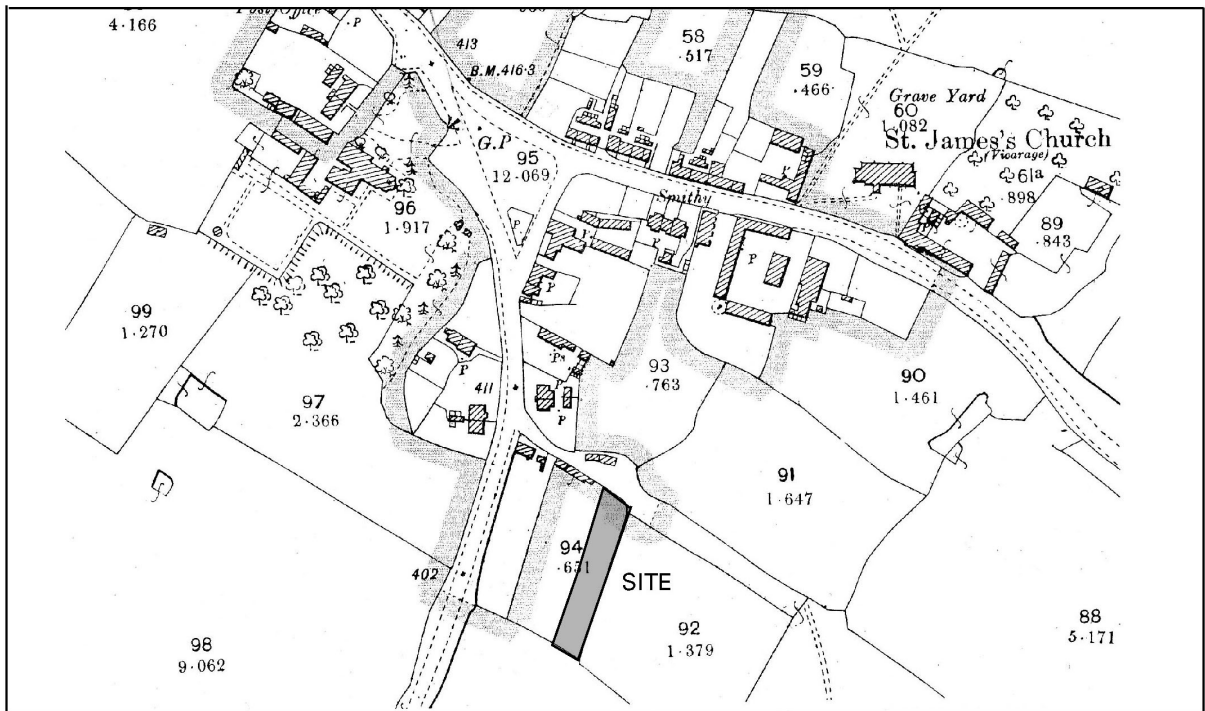


Fig. 3: Detail from the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1903

by the end of the medieval period, with 28 families in 1564, but by 1801 the population was 319 (Nichols 1811, 860).

3.3 The probable extent of the medieval and early post medieval village has been plotted (HER MLA 8423) and suggests that the current development area lay just within its southern edge. The medieval village included the church (HER MLA 13062) and to its north-west what is today the site of a large moated enclosure (HER MLA 3271), presumably the manor house. The church, which is mentioned in documents as early as 1129, was a chapel of the church of Orton-on-the-Hill from the 12th until the 19th century, when in 1839 Twycross became an ecclesiastical parish in its own right (Nichols 1811, 861; VCH 1908, 75-6). The current building is of largely 14th-/15th-century date.

3.4 To the north of the present occupation along Church Street is a series of earthworks which indicate the site of a moat and associated fishponds, as well as other enclosures (HER MLA 3271; Scheduled Ancient Monument Number 17064). Between the earthworks and the church a number of archaeological evaluations and watching briefs were carried out by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services between 2000 and 2004 (HER MLE 10079). These uncovered ditches, a posthole, a gully and a possible pond that belonged to the medieval village and may have been associated with the earthwork complex to the north.

3.5 The village is first shown in detail on the tithe map of 1844 (LCRO DE 380/42; Fig. 2). At this time a building, probably a house, is shown on the street frontage in the area of what is today No 1 Flax Lane. What may have been the same building, with extensions to the east, is shown along the street frontage in 1903 (Ordnance Survey 1903; Fig. 3) but by 1924 (Ordnance Survey 1924) the building is shorter, the easternmost extension having been demolished. None of these buildings survive, and the current No 1 Flax Lane is of comparatively modern origin. The early maps do not show any buildings on the present site.

## 4. Observation of Groundworks

4.1 Excavation was carried out by a small 360° tracked excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 4). The area of the new access road was stripped of overburden to a depth of 0.30-0.40m below the former ground surface, though this was insufficient to encounter the geological natural. Following this, a large pit measuring 3.2m square by 3m deep was cut to the rear of the new property to take a plastic service tank. Finally the foundation trenches were excavated. These measured c.0.70m wide and were cut to a depth of up to 1.5m below the former ground surface at the southern end, rising to 1.0m deep at the north.

4.2 In the driveway 0.3-0.4m of brown sandy loam (4) was removed, though no earlier deposits were reached (Fig. 5). A single sherd of Romano-British greyware, of probable 4th-century date, was recovered from this layer, which represented the garden soil from the existing house.

4.3 To the rear of the plot, in the tank pit, the geological natural sandy clay was recorded at c.0.7m below the existing ground surface (Fig. 6). It was overlain by a layer of brown loam 0.4m thick (5) that probably represented an earlier cultivation soil. Layer 5 was overlain by c.0.30m of very dark brown sandy clay loam topsoil (1).

4.4 In the foundation trenches geological natural sandy clay (3) was encountered at c.0.4m below the existing ground surface (Figs. 7, 8). This was overlain by c.0.10m of light brown sandy clay that contained frequent small pebbles (2), in turn overlain by 0.30m of very dark brown sandy clay loam topsoil (1).

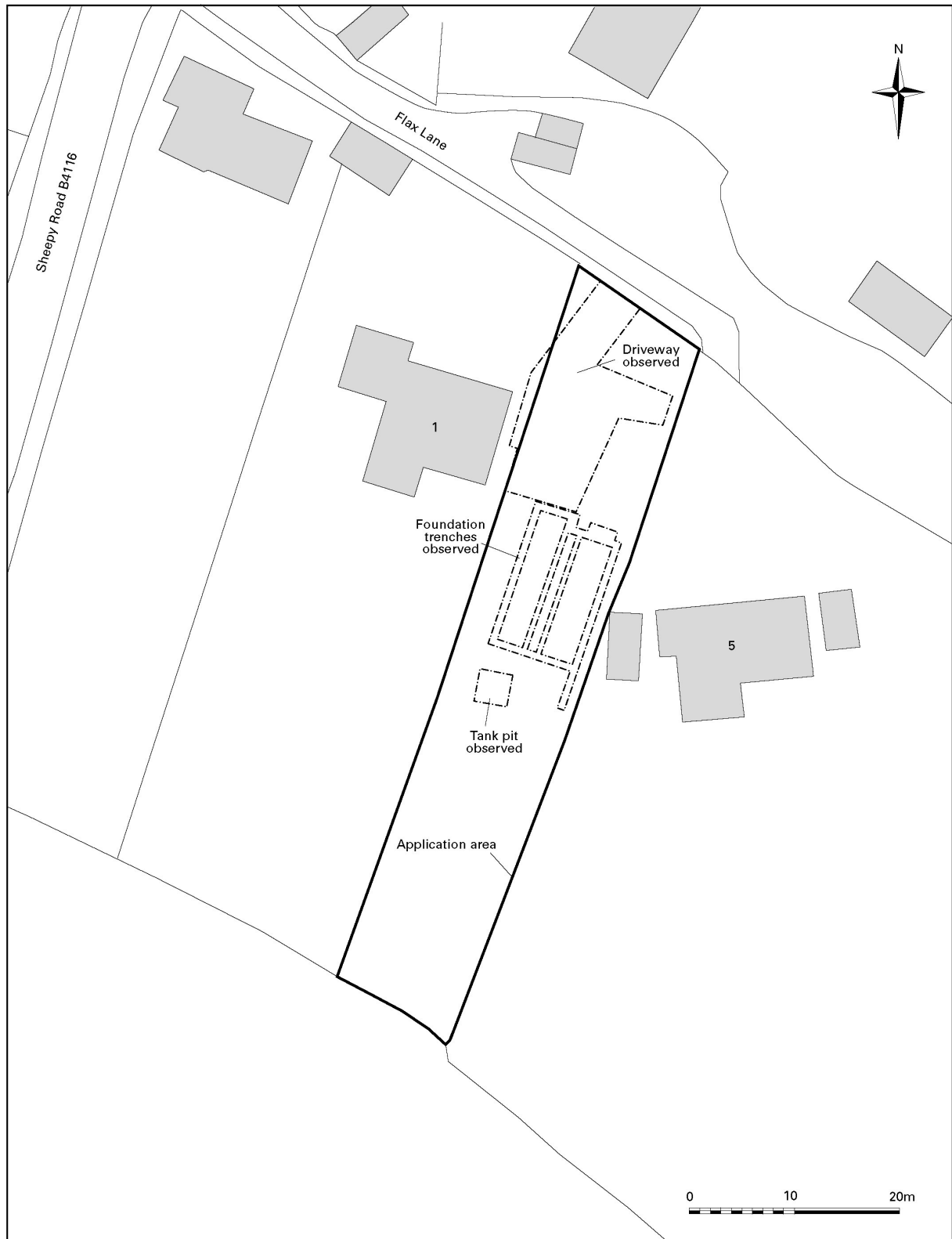


Fig. 4: Areas Observed



Fig. 5: Driveway looking south-west



Fig. 6: Tank pit looking north-east





Fig. 7: Foundation trenches looking north-west



Fig. 8: Foundation trenches looking south-east

## 5. Conclusions

5.1 No evidence for Romano-British settlement was found. A single sherd of Romano-British greyware was recovered, but this confirms the general activity suggested by other finds in the area rather than identifying a specific settlement site.

5.2 There was no evidence for medieval occupation along the Flax Lane frontage, although this may have been because insufficient overburden was stripped in this area and it is possible that remains may survive at a greater depth. However, there were no remains of structures, rubbish pits or any other archaeological features from elsewhere on the site which, with the absence of finds, does suggest that it may not have been occupied in the medieval or post-medieval periods.

## Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Beckett Associates, Architects, for commissioning the work. Work on site was carried out by Bryn Gethin and Rob Jones. The project was managed by Ian Greig. This report was written by Chris Jones, with archaeological and historical background researched by Caroline Rann. It was edited by Ian Greig and illustrated by Candy Stevens.

## Bibliography

British Geological Survey 1953 *1:50000 Series, England and Wales, Sheet 155 Atherstone, Solid and Drift Geology*

LCRO DE 380/42 *Draft tithe plan of Twycross, 1844, Leicestershire County Record Office*

Nichols, J. 1811 *History and Antiquities of Leicestershire Vol IV, Part II, London*

Ordnance Survey 1835 *First Edition 1 inch to 1 mile map, Sheet 63, Leicester*

Ordnance Survey 1903 *Second Edition 1:2500 Map of Leicestershire, Sheet XXVIII.12*

Ordnance Survey 1924 *Third Edition 1:2500 Map of Leicestershire, Sheet XXVIII.12*

VCH 1908 *The Victoria County History of Warwickshire, Vol II, London*

## Appendix A: List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	Foundations & tank pit	Topsoil
2	Foundations	Light brown sandy clay with pebbles
3	Foundations & tank pit	Geological natural sandy clay
4	Driveway	Brown sandy loam garden soil
5	Tank pit	Brown loam cultivation soil

## Appendix B: Archive Summary Sheet

<i>Site Name/Parish</i>	<b>Land between 1 and 5 Flax Lane, Twycross</b>	
<i>Acc No/Site Code</i>	<b>X.A76.2007 / FT07</b>	
<i>Organisation</i>	<b>Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group</b>	
<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 – Primary Context Records	5
B.2	Site Data – List of Contexts	1
B.3	Site Data – Primary Field Drawing	1
B.4	Site Data – Synthesised Drawings	2 (on CD below)
C.1	Finds Data – List of Finds	1
D.1	Catalogue of Photographs	1
D.2a	Digital Photographs Index Print	1 sheet
D.2b	Digital photographs	8 (on CD below)
D.2c	Colour Slides 1-5	1 sheet
D.2d	Black and White Negatives (1 part film)	1 sheet
D.2e	Black and White Prints 1/32-36, 2/1-2	7 prints
E.1	Environmental/Ecofact Data	None
F.1a	Documentary - Developer's plan	1 folded
F.1b	Documentary – Old maps	None
G.1a	Correspondence – Planning Brief	8 pages
G.1b	Correspondence – Museum proposal	3 pages
H.1	Miscellaneous – CD with <i>Report files</i> (0814FT07.doc, <i>Archive catalogue</i> (FT07Arcind.doc), <i>Drawings</i> (FT07fig 1 loc.pdf, FT07fig 4 areas obs.pdf and <i>Digital Photographs</i> (FT07-01–08.jpg)	1 CD