

# Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology



**Bowden Ridge Research - Test Pit 4 (BRR/17/4)**  
**The Ridgeway, Market Harborough LE16 7HG**  
**Leicestershire County Council Accession No. X.A46.2016**  
**Grid Reference: SP73941 88118**  
**Date of Excavation: 29th July 2017**



*Fig 1 Pit excavation BRR/17/4*

This test pit excavation was carried out by Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology in the back garden of a house on The Ridgeway in the north-eastern part of Market Harborough and towards the eastern end of the long hill named Bowden Ridge. The pit was dug 2 metres from the back fence of the garden and 2 metres from the western boundary of the property, see map (Fig.2).

## **Topography**

The property lies near the northern limit of post war development in Market Harborough on the southern slope of Bowden Ridge, the long flat topped hill separating the town from the village of Great Bowden in the valley to the north.. It has an altitude of 108 metres at the front of the property and approximately 106 metres at the back garden boundary with the houses on Arden Way. The River Welland is approximately 640 metres distant at its nearest point. The centre of the town is some 1070 metres distant. From the road the property slopes down to a terraced area on which the property and patio area is built. This then drops approximately 1 metre to a lawned area which continues level to the rear of the property and on which the pit was dug.

This level area then continues beyond the boundary of this property into the back garden of the later neighbouring property in Arden Way before dropping steeply to the site of the Arden Way house. There is no information on the age of this terracing and it is difficult to

ascertain whether this pattern is repeated in adjoining properties. It is known that at least the rear part this garden was an orchard prior to the bungalow being built around 1962. There is no evidence remaining from the open field system. This area would have been part of a furlong of the South Field but the actual furlong has not been identified. It is unlikely that any terracing would have been part of the medieval ploughing system and so the land was either terraced later (post enclosure) or it may have been an area of pasture and the terracing may be much older, dating even to the Roman period settlement. This would have been an area close to the township on the summit and maybe the southern slope was used for vegetable growing.

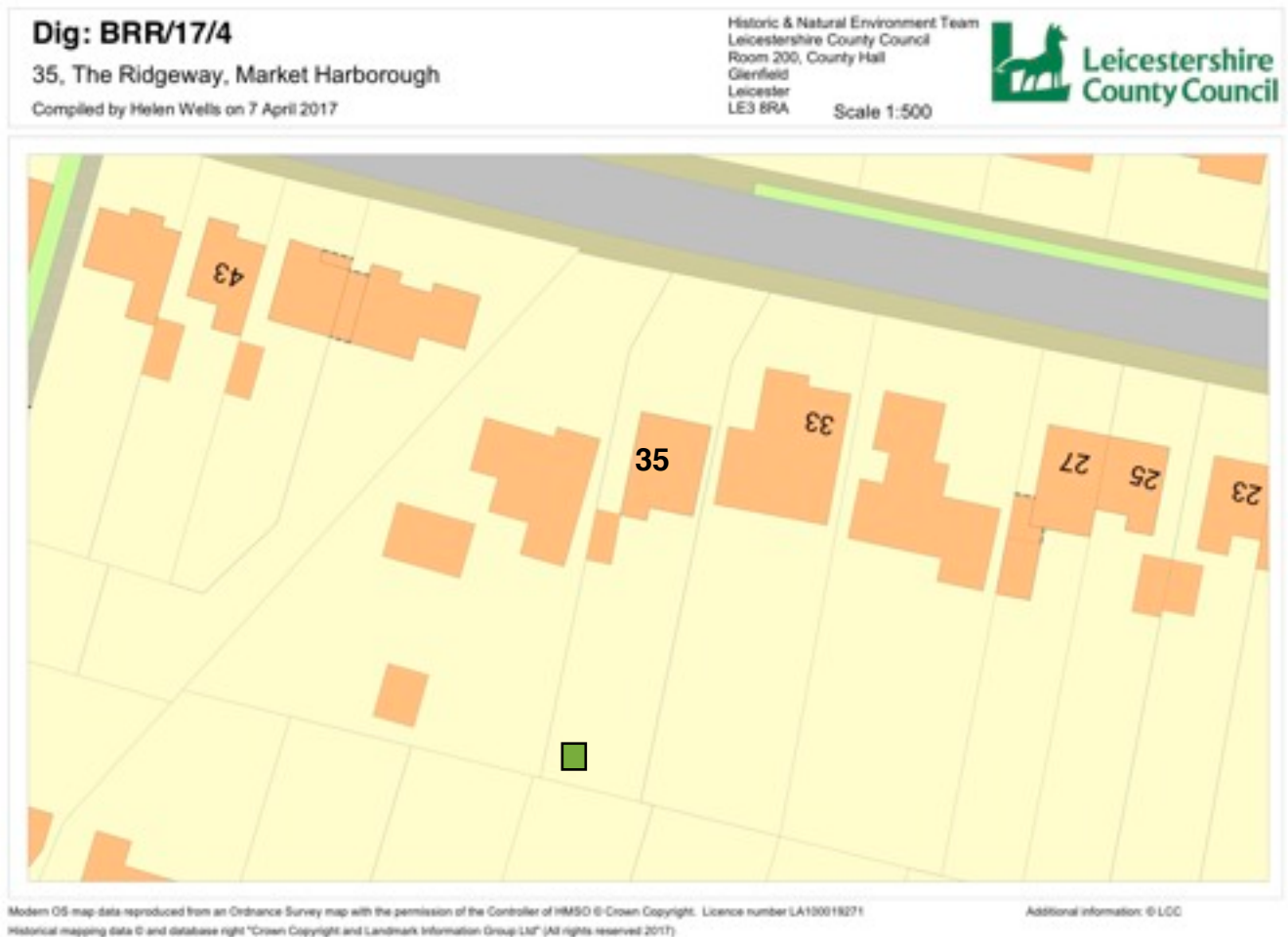


Fig 2 Map showing position of test pit in garden

## Geology

Below approximately 10 cm of fine topsoil the overlying geology of glacial till began to appear. The British Geological Survey's map shows this site to be on the edge of an area of glacial till described as follows:

**Description:** *Till, Mid Pleistocene - Diamiction. Superficial Deposits formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. Local environment previously dominated by ice age conditions.*

**Setting:** *ice age conditions. These rocks were formed in cold periods with Ice Age glaciers scouring the landscape and depositing moraines of till with outwash sand and gravel deposits from seasonal and post glacial meltwaters.*

The soil from context 2 downwards was typical of the glacial till found in other pits on this hilltop, increasingly compacted, difficult to dig and impossible to sieve. The till soil was a mixture of sand, gravel, small flints and chert in addition to clay. The underlying geology was not reached but is described in the BGS as Dyrham Formation, siltstone and mudstone formed 183-190 million years ago during the Jurassic Period. The dig was halted when two contexts (20cm) did not appear to yield any further finds.

## History

The bungalow was built around 1962, the first part of the post war development of The Ridgeway. The neighbouring property, to the west, adjoins the long post Enclosure boundary which runs from the railway in the north and can be traced down the hill to the town centre. Before the houses were built this area was part of an old orchard, one apple tree surviving to the present-day. Before Enclosure in 1776 it would have been part of Bowden's Open Fields system and within a furlong of the South Field. We have not been able to identify the particular furlong by name.

Most historical information on this area dates from the Roman period. A large number of Roman period artifacts were recovered during the construction of houses on the northern side of The Ridgeway, east of the diagonal hedge line in the 1960s, 32 and 34 The Ridgeway are the nearest sites and are some 40 metres distant from the property.(see details below).

## Roman pottery from the Ridgeway identified May 1985 by Dr Richard Pollard of LCC

The finds were probably collected by residents from their gardens and donated to the Harborough Historical Society. These were placed in the Harborough Museum when it opened in 1983 and were accessioned under the reference LEIMH100.1983.

*Looking on an old OS map the finds seem to come from the first area of development along The Ridgeway ie from 2-34 and some were handed over to the Historical Society in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the houses were first built. Not sure if there was another time of collection around when the Museum opened in 1983. (Pam Aucott Feb 2016)*

1. 3 The Ridgeway Small bronze coin of Valens AD 364-378 SP1408 3305 (?) possibly SP74088805
2. 17 The Ridgeway Small bronze coin of Crispus (became a Caesar in AD 317 executed by his father ! Constantine I in AD326)
3. 2 The Ridgeway Fragments of greyware found 2' deep under layer of broken stone.
4. 6 The Ridgeway Follis of Constantine I (AD 306-337) " Small bronze coin Vileutihian (could be Vitellius AD69 or more likely because of date -Valentinian I or II (AD364-392)
5. 10 The Ridgeway Bronze coin of Allectus (AD 293-296)
6. 22 The Ridgeway 113 Roman sherds (mostly late grog tempered ware), 2 medieval and post medieval
7. 24 The Ridgeway 2 sherds Roman pottery

8. 30 The Ridgeway 123 sherds Roman, 11 medieval, 2 post medieval, 2 tessera and a coin.
9. 32 The Ridgeway 88 Roman sherds, 1 tessera, 1 late Iron Age, 12 medieval, 4 post medieval.
10. 34 The Ridgeway Roman sherds and an area of cobbled floor
11. 56 The Ridgeway bronze coin Constantine II (*AD317-340*), 32 Roman sherds and 2 medieval
12. 47 Great Bowden Road 4 sherds Roman (1 geyware, 1 shelly, 1 colour coated) + coin of Magnus Maximus (*AD383-388*)
13. 97 Great Bowden Road 35 Roman sherds, 7 late Iron Age, 9 medieval, 5 post medieval.
14. 99 Great Bowden Road 2 sherds greyware and 1 shellyware.
15. White Lodge, Great Bowden Road sparse scatter of Roman (inc greyware and samian), tessera and oyster shells
16. Great Bowden Hill A substantial rim sherd of a vessel decorated by scoring and finger decoration, but no exact location.

*Ignoring the coin from possibly 69AD the period covered by evidence of Roman occupation is mostly 4th century (293-392 AD) which would fit the late grog tempered ware from 22 The Ridgeway. (R Culkin 2016) 2016 additions in italics.*

Great Bowden Heritage carried out two excavations at 12 The Ridgeway in 2005. (Historic Environment Record MLE16380) Pottery found during these excavations was verified by Leicestershire County Council and is summarized below:

Late Iron Age/Early Roman 1cAD = 18 sherds

Roman (13 categories) = 103 sherds Early Anglo-Saxon = 2 sherds Early Medieval = 9 sherds Late Medieval = 2 sherds

Post medieval = 25 sherds

Two large jars full of Roman and possibly Iron Age pottery from 8 The Ridgeway was handed in at an event run by Great Bowden Heritage. This was taken and identified by Leicestershire County Council Museum Service. It is listed as 200 plus sherds on Historic Environment Record entry MLE 1948. No further details are available at present. The excavation site is approximately 340 metres south-east of Waterfield Place MLE19107, a mid to late Iron Age settlement excavated by ULAS in 2011.

## Method

A test pit, 1 metre x 1 metre was dug in 10 cm contexts in the lawn in the back garden. The pit was photographed before the start of each context and the spoil was sieved or broken up into small pieces to extract any finds. When it was considered that the natural had been reached the sections were photographed and the pit was backfilled replacing the soil in the correct order and finally replacing the turf. The finds have been photographed, and identification of the pottery verified by an expert before being returned to the safe-keeping of the property owners. A documentary archive will be placed in the care of Leicestershire County Council and data passed to the Historic Environment Record.

## Results

**Context 1** dug to a depth of 10 cm. Below the turf the soil was dark brown, friable, with a few stones. Typical 19th century and modern buried rubbish with no pottery other than flowerpot fragments.

**Context 2** dug to a depth of 20 cm. Soil became mid brown, heavier and stonier and showing evidence of glacial till characteristics. There was evidence of brick waste, clinker, coal and metal waste and painted concrete with more general refuse. Excavated pottery finds from the 12th century to post medieval and modern.

**Context 3** dug to a depth of 30 cm. Soil was mid brown, more compacted and had to be broken up and not sieved. It was very stony with numerous flints and some chalk. The finds of coal, clinker, metal, glass and brick continued along with modern plastic indicating recent disturbance. Roman grey ware (1 sherd) was excavated along with post medieval and modern pottery.

**Context 4** dug to a depth of 40 cm. Soil was now a yellowish, mid-brown and typical of glacial till in this area. There was a variety of small stones of different types, flints, fossils and the spoil could not be sieved or crumbled and could only be broken up with trowels. There were similar finds to the previous contexts with a piece of polystyrene foam confirming its disturbance in modern times. There were two small sherds of post medieval pottery.

**Context 5** dug to a depth of 50 cm. Hard compacted till with no finds.

## **Conclusion**

The finds indicate an area of soil disturbance, probably for the burial of rubbish in modern times, possibly while it was part of an orchard. This refuse contained a large quantity of brick and building material and more specifically quantities of clinker and metal waste which could indicate some metalworking enterprise close by.

The glacial till was possible to dig and partly sieve but became very compacted and almost impossible to work by hand by the end of Context 4. Context 5 produced no finds and it was assumed that this layer had not been disturbed in the past.

Pottery finds were unstratified and from the Roman period onwards probably indicating that this area was under the plough in the South Field of the Open Fields of Great Bowden until the Enclosure of the fields in 1776. It was disappointing that we found only one small sherd of Roman pottery when this site is so close to others where much larger assemblages of Roman period material have been found. With all test pits there is an element of luck and with this one we did not choose the same location as the Roman period people did for their refuse pits.





## Pottery extracted from BRR/17/4 Verified by University of Leicester

Context	Details
1	<b>Modern</b> - 3 x terracotta flowerpot = 26.40 grams
2	<p><b>Medieval</b> Reduced sandy ware 12th-13thC x 2 from same vessel = 14.45 grams</p> <p><b>Post medieval</b> - 1 x salt glazed white stoneware (pitted) = 0.60 grams</p> <p><b>Post medieval</b> - 1 x EA6 Blackware c1650-1750 = 0.50 grams</p> <p><b>Modern</b> - 2 x glazed ( white, blue stripes ) = 1.40 grams</p> <p><b>Modern</b> - 9 x terracotta probably flowerpot = 12.45 grams</p>
3	<p><b>Roman</b> - 1 x fine sandy grey ware, 2nd-4th C = 2.85 grams</p> <p><b>Post medieval</b> - 3 x pancheon ware = 6.10 grams</p> <p><b>Modern</b> - 1 x stoneware, unclassified, probably base of jar = 37.95 grams</p> <p><b>Modern</b> 1 x glazed china = 1.65 grams</p> <p><b>Modern</b> - 3 x terracotta flowerpot = 3.50 grams</p>
4	<p><b>Post medieval/Modern</b> 1x EA2 earthenware = 0.60 grams</p> <p><b>Post medieval</b> - Midland Black ware = 0.40 grams</p>
5	<b>No pottery</b>



## Post excavation processed Finds, BRR//17/4 Discarded and Retained

**Site Code: BRR/17/4**  
**Context 1**

C1	Type	Discarded	Retained
	Pottery	None	All retained. See verified pottery list
	Flint & worked/ burnt stone	None	None
	Animal Bone	None	Small scapula (possibly bird) = 0.2 grams
	Ceramic excluding pottery	7 x various brick fragments = 16.95 grams	5 x various brick fragments = 41.70 grams
	Glass	None	6 x window glass fragments = 9.10 grams
	Metal & Metal working	8 x clinker (some with burnt stone attached) = 39.30 grams	4 x clinker (some with burnt stone attached) = 32.9 grams 1 x tack (leather attached) = 1.22 grams 1 x spoon handle = 2.15 grams 2 x unidentified fragments = 3.40 grams 1 x wire = 0.20 grams
	All Other Finds	30 x coal/coke/charcoal = 49.75 grams	4 x coal/coke = 19 grams 2 x Welsh slate = 5.40 grams 9 x plastic fragments = 1.85 grams 7 x leather fragments = 3.10 grams

**Site Code: BRR/17/4**  
**Context 2**

C2	Type	Discarded	Retained
	Pottery	None	All retained. See verified pottery list
	Flint & worked/ burnt stone	None	None
	Animal Bone	None	None



<b>C2</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Discarded</b>	<b>Retained</b>
	Ceramic excluding pottery	24 x various brick and tile fragments = 87.25 grams	6 x various brick and tile fragments = 40.15 grams
	Glass	None	1 x window glass = 4.15 grams 1 x clear bottle glass = 2.00 grams embossed "10" 1 x green bottle glass = 0.75 grams
	Metal & Metal working	None	1 x aluminium sheet + hole = 16.10 grams 1 x metal wire = 3.00 grams 1 x nail (horseshoe? = 4.65 grams 1 x corroded decorative spoon (minus part of bowl) or spatula = 13.40 grams, 13,4 cm long 2 x unidentified corroded metal = 14.80 grams 9 x clinker, some with burnt stone = 57.25 grams
	All Other Finds	67 x coal, coke, charcoal = 130.60 grams	1 x silver paper = 0.20 grams 1 x shaped painted concrete = 26.90 grams 1 x Welsh slate = 0.90 grams 1 x white plastic ? doorstep = 38.6 grams 1 x plastic tape plant label "Victoria" = 0.35 grams 3 x coal/coke = 12.25 grams

**Site Code: BRR/17/4**

**Context 3**

<b>C3</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Discarded</b>	<b>Retained</b>
	Pottery	None	All retained. See verified pottery list.
	Flint & worked/ burnt stone	None	None
	Animal Bone	None	1 x set of 3 small herbivore teeth = 1.15 grams 2 x unidentified bone fragments = 3.40 grams
	Ceramic excluding pottery	14 x brick fragments = 20.20 grams	1 x clay pipe stem (early) = 2.30 grams 5 x brick fragments = 7.55 grams
	Glass	None	1 x window glass = 6.90 grams 2 x fine clear glass = 1.30 grams 1 x flat green glass = 0.80 grams
	Metal & Metal working	52 x clinker, some with stone attached = 314.60 grams	1 x metal bolt = 9.50 grams 1 x nail = 1.90 grams 1 x nail (? horseshoe) = 4.25 grams 1 x wire = 0.40 grams 5 x clinker & burnt stone = 65.00 grams

<b>C3</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Discarded</b>	<b>Retained</b>
	All Other Finds	38 x coal, coke, charcoal = 136.70 grams	1 x yellow plastic tape = 0.85 grams 1 x sweet wrapping = 0.01 grams 1 x Welsh slate = 12.45 grams 1 x clear plastic rim frag. = 1.40 grams 4 x coal, coke = 25.05 grams

**Site Code: BRR/17/4**  
**Context 4**

<b>C4</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Discarded</b>	<b>Retained</b>
	Pottery	None	All retained. See verified pottery list.
	Flint & worked/ burnt stone	None	None
	Animal Bone	None	1 x fragment = 0.25 grams
	Ceramic excluding pottery	None	8 x brick fragments = 8.70 grams 1 x ? terracotta tile = 23.25 grams
	Glass	None	None
	Metal & Metal working	None	1 x nail or tack = 3.10 grams 12 x clinker = 26.90 grams
	All Other Finds	None	19 x coal, coke = 30.00 grams 1 x fragment polystyrene foam = <0.10 grams