

Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology

Bowden Ridge Research - Test Pit 3 (BRR/17/3)

Great Bowden Road, Market Harborough LE16 7DG (1)

Leicestershire County Council Accession No. X.A46.2016

Grid Reference: SP74191 88095

Date of Excavation: 6th May 2017



Fig 1: Site of excavation - pit dug in lawn close to area marked by black square.

This test pit excavation was carried out by Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology in the back garden of a house on Great Bowden Road in the north-eastern part of Market Harborough and at the eastern end of the long hill named Bowden Ridge.

Topography

The property lies at the highest point of Great Bowden Road on the eastern side. The Ridgeway is to the west and Great Bowden Road drops downhill to the railway station towards the south. Within 180 metres the road crosses into Great Bowden by way of the railway bridge towards the north. The back garden of the property adjoins the wooded railway cutting to the east which drops steeply to the line. The front garden drops steeply towards the house and the back garden has a slight slope down towards the railway. This line of houses forms the eastern boundary of the residential area in this part of the town. It has an altitude of 100 metres at the front of the property and approximately 94 metres where it joins the railway land. The River Welland is 470 metres distant at its nearest point. The centre of the town is some 1172 metres distant. Before the railway was cut through the hill would have dropped sharply at this point towards the river and the valley floor.

The house was built in the 1960s. The upper floor is at ground level with the lower floor excavated from the slope of the hill. The garden does not maintain the steep slope found

at the front of the premises but slopes only slightly towards the railway cutting at the rear of the garden. The original incline has been lost.

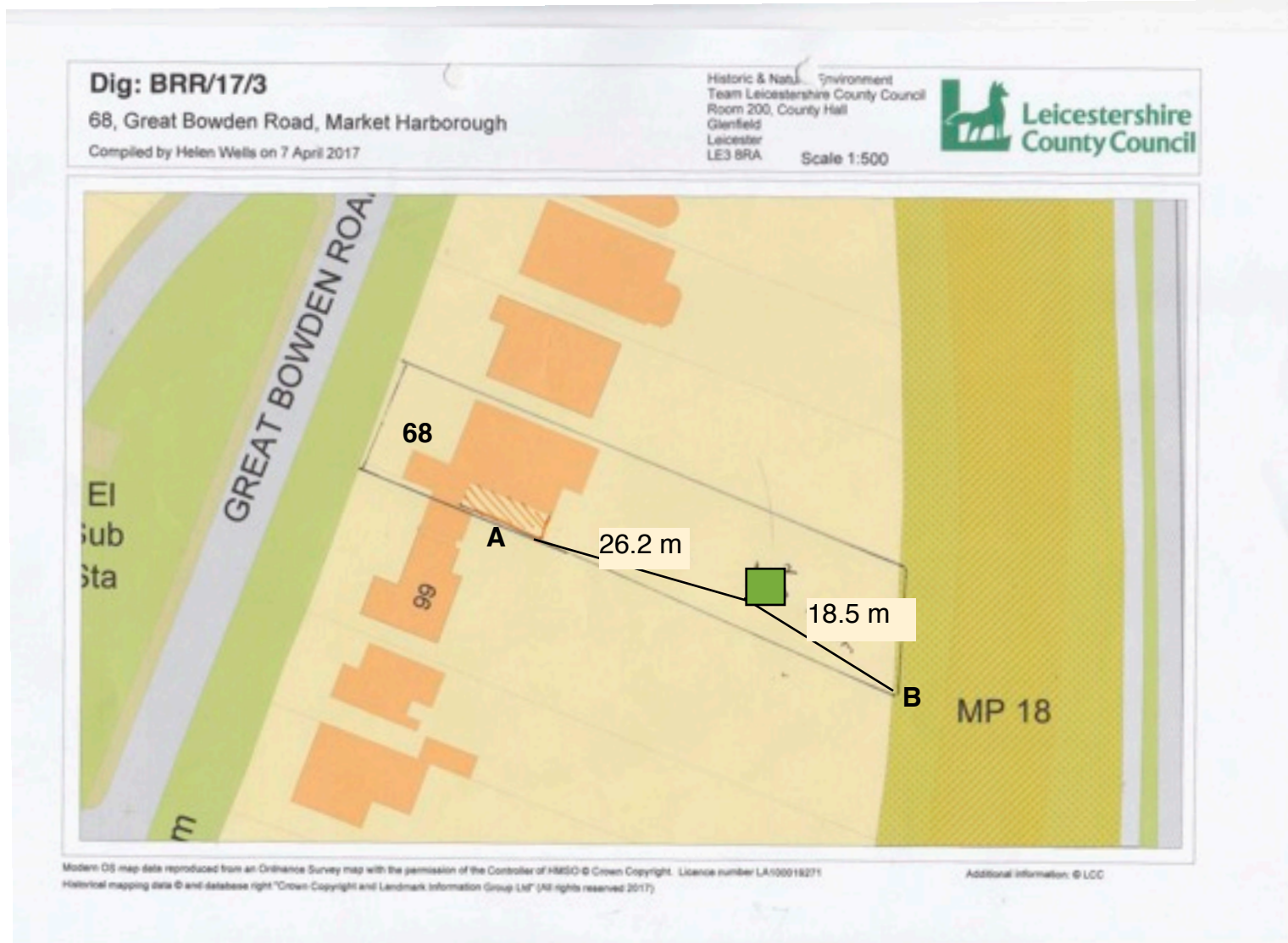


Fig. 2 Map showing the location of the test pit in the back garden. 26.2 metres from the southern boundary level with the back of the house, 18.5 metres from the south-east corner of the garden, both to south-west corner of pit

Geology

Below approximately 20 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 - Diamicton. 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 3 downwards was typical of the glacial till found in other pits on this hilltop but in this case much less compressed and easy to dig. It was concluded that this soil had been previously excavated when the lower part of the house had been built and spread over the plot leveling the garden. The till soil was a mixture of sand, gravel, small flints and chert in addition to clay. The layer of deposited soil was too deep for the excavation team to reach the underlying original ground surface. 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.

History

The neighbouring houses were also built at the same time on what was previously farmland. 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. There is nothing on the Lidar image to indicate the direction of the ridges

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 Ridgeway and on the western side of Great Bowden Road between 40 metres and 228 metres distant from this property towards the west, see below. The excavation carried out by the group in 2016 in Bowden Ridge cul de sac (BRR/16/2), approximately 210 metres distant, revealed a large assemblage of Roman pottery and animal bones probably from a refuse ditch. (www.greatbowdenheritage.btck.co.uk/ / Bowden Ridge Research - Digs on the Ridge.

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.*

However, nothing from the Roman period had been logged from the area east of Great Bowden Road and was one reason for the excavation in this location.

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 400 metre east of Waterfield Place MLE19107, a mid to late Iron Age settlement excavated by ULAS in 2011.

A windmill site north of White Lodge, Great Bowden is listed under Historic Environment Record MLE1956 Grid Reference:SP 741 882 with the following comment "A windmill in

the south field of Great Bowden is mentioned in 1543, this may be the one on Prior (1779) but not on any subsequent maps. A windmill in 1623 that was still there in 1690 may be this mill.” One possible site for this mill is approximately 130 metre, north-west from the excavation site.

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. The excavation was halted at 50 cm depth because of the disturbed nature of the soil and lack of finds. 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 at the University of Leicester 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

Contexts 1 and 2. The soil in the first 2 contexts, both 10 cm in depth was a mid brown loam, with no stones but visible sand particles. The small quantity and size of the finds included pottery from the Roman period to post medieval. The soil at the lower part of Context 2 began to change to the distinct and coarse glacial till found in other excavations elsewhere on this hilltop with its composition of clay, sand, gravel, flint and chert.

Contexts 3,4 and 5. The soil was more compacted, with deposits of gravel, sand, small stones, flint and red sandstone. There were visible areas of clay only in context 4. Finds were again small in size and quantity dating from the Iron Age until modern times providing evidence that the soil had been disturbed and redistributed. Strangely, there were no tree

roots present although there were several mature trees in the proximity of the pit, including two weeping willows. The compaction of the soil was considerably less than in nearby pits and again suggested it had been previously excavated and redeposited. As explained above once it became clear that the deposition was thick and the original surface could not be reached the excavation was halted and the pit backfilled.



Fig. 3 showing the change in soil colour and composition at the lower part of context 2



Fig 4 Small multi-period finds typical of those found in this pit. This assemblage include one sherd of Mid to late Iron Age pottery, bottom left, third from the left.



Fig 5. Pottery from Roman, medieval and post medieval periods in one context

Conclusion

The disturbed nature of the ground prevents any firm conclusions being drawn. The pottery found indicated that there was material added, possibly from field manuring from the Iron Age onwards including some from the medieval period suggesting that this area was under ridge and furrow cultivation. The original incline would have been quite steep and possibly similar to the slopes on the northern side of the hill where the ridge and furrow earthworks still remain. Because of the varied ages of the finds it is impossible to conclude whether they came from a refuse pit on the site of the house foundations excavation or were scattered on the fields.



Pottery extracted from BRR/17/3
verified by University of Leicester Archaeological Services

Context	Details
1	1 x Roman grey ware, fairly early, late 1st-2ndC could be late 1st-mid2ndC. = 1.45g
2	1 x Roman grey ware same vessel as above. = 2.85g 1 x Medieval Chilvers Coton ware 1250+ = 6.10g 1 x Post-Med earthenware 17 th /18thC (similar pancheon) = 1.25g
3	1 x mid-late Iron Age granitic tempered (coarse black sherd with rock inclusions) = 5.9g 1 x early Roman sandy ware mid-late1stC (fine black sherd) 2 x Roman grey ware 2ndC+, not closely datable. = 7.6g with item above 1 x Roman white ware late1st-2ndC. = 0.75g 1 x could be severely abraded oxidised ware or tile 2 x small frags tile. 1 x Post Med. white salt glazed stoneware late 18thC = 4.10g 2 x Post Med. brown salt glazed stoneware 18 th /19thC = 5.65g 1 x Modern stoneware = 1.65g
4	1 x Roman Nene Valley colour-coated ware, could be a beaker or flagon late 2nd-3rdC+ = 2.25g 1 tiny frag micaceous stone 0.55g (note not grey ware) 4 x small frags tile = 4.25g 1 x Medieval sandy ware 14thC = 1.75g 1 x Post Med. Midland Yellow 16 th /17thC = 7.25g 1 x Post Med. slipware (the one with the dragged brown pattern) 18thC = 13.95
5	1 x Post Med. - Midland Black Ware 17th/18thC = 1.35g



Other Finds Extracted from BRR/17/3

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Cont ext	Ceramic exclud. pottery	Animal Bone	Worked stone & flint	Metal & Metal working	Glass	All other finds
1	old brick (+inclusions) = 2.85g	4 frags =2.35g (including burnt bone)			1 x modern clear =0.2g	1 x bean? in semi fossilised state?
2		x 2 = 0.95g (part of tooth & tusk)	possible flint core - faint signs of removals = 42.05g	1 x cable clip = 1.90g		charcoal x 4 = 2.25g thin plastic 0.01g
3	2 x clay pipe stems = 2.40g	10 frags. = 6.95g	1= 2.95g possibly removals on edge	metal cap = 1.4g	1 x green bottle glass = 5.7g	charcoal = 4.25g Sample of compressed glacial till with fossils(?) 66.2g
4		11 frags. = 10.30g		3 pieces of lead = 17.55g	1 x flat green glass = 1.05g	charcoal x 6 = 6.70g
5						charcoal x 1 = 1.20g

There were very few finds excavated on this site and all were retained, identified, boxed and left with the house owners for safe-keeping.

30th June 2017