



**University of
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**An Archaeological Strip, Map and
Sample Excavation and Watching Brief
at The Old Rectory, Mowsley
Leicestershire
(SP646 889)**

Jennifer Browning



ULAS Report No 2011-192
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Sample Excavation and Watching Brief at
The Old Rectory, Mowsley,
Leicestershire
(SP 646 889)**

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for

Mr. & Mrs. P. Latham

Checked by Project Manager

Signed:



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ULAS Report No.2011-192

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An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation and Watching Brief at The Old Rectory, Mowsley, Leicestershire (SP 646 889)

Jennifer Browning

Summary

An archaeological strip, map and sample excavation and watching brief was carried out at The Old Rectory, Mowsley, Leicestershire (SP 646 889) in November 2011 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services during groundworks for a new pond (PA: 10/01648/FUL). The site was located directly east of Mowsley Brook on land belonging to the Old Rectory. No archaeological deposits were identified during the course of the work, however, finds recovered during topsoil stripping included a Mesolithic secondary bladelet, a sherd of medieval Chilvers Coton ware and fragments of post-medieval brick and tile. The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A165 2011.

Introduction

In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, Policy HE12.3 (DCLG 2010), this document forms the report for an archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation and watching brief at The Old Rectory, Mowsley, Leicestershire, NGR SP 646 889. Planning permission has been granted by Harborough District Council for the creation of a pond within the grounds of the Old Rectory (10/01648/FUL), with a condition requiring the implementation of a scheme of archaeological investigation. This comprised an archaeologically supervised soil strip of the affected area, together with archaeological excavation and recording of archaeological deposits as necessary. No brief has been issued by the Senior Planning Archaeologist and the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Buckley 2011) was based on the Leicestershire County Council advice letter to Harborough District (CLE7522/TH/4/1/2011).

Location and Geology

Mowsley lies in the Harborough District of Leicestershire, c.12 miles south of Leicester (Figure 1). The site is located on the northern side of the village, to the west of The Old Rectory (Figure 2) at an approximate height of 145m O.D and covers an area of 1165 square metres. The Bedrock Geology consists of Dyrham Formation Siltstone and Mudstone Interbedded (British Geological Survey).

The new pond was sited on land to the rear of the Old Rectory, upon a steep slope from east down to west; a contour plan provided by Mr. Latham indicates that there is a c.7m difference between the top and the bottom of the slope. Prior to the commencement of work the area consisted of meadow at the top, while the bank itself was lightly wooded with bushes, scrub and small trees. At the base of the slope flows the Mowsley Brook and a small spring was located south of the area, which it is hoped will feed the new pond. The site for the pond was located from just above the base of the slope to approximately halfway up, while the remainder of the affected area was subject to landscaping.



Figure 1: Site Location

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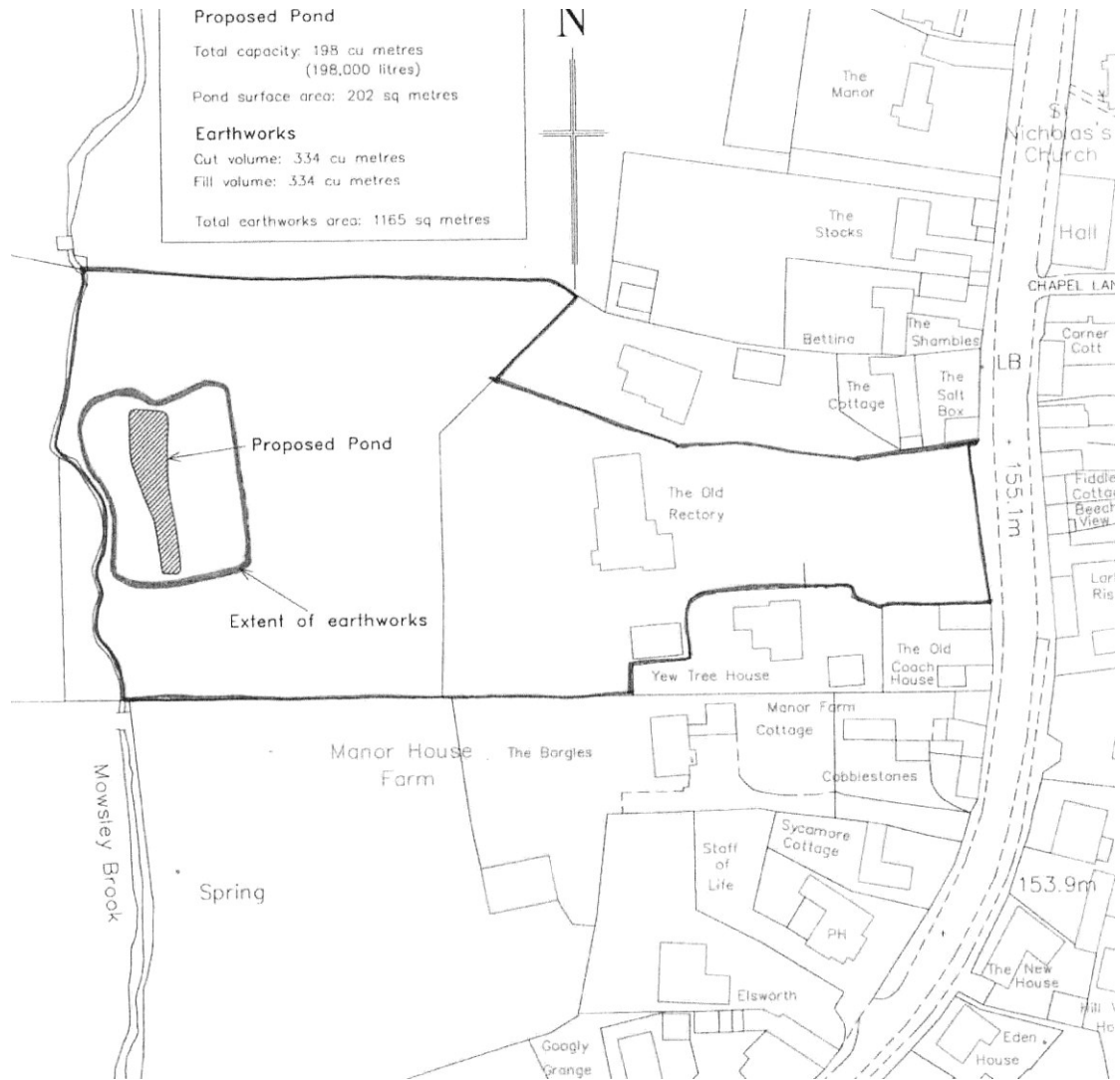


Figure 2: Site plan (supplied by client, Scale 1:1250)

Historical and Archaeological Background

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application site lies in an area of archaeological interest as it is situated within the medieval and post-medieval settlement core of the village (HER ref. MLE 10416) and Roman remains are also known from the vicinity (MLE 7900). Fred Hartley’s unpublished earthwork drawing (kindly supplied by the Archaeological Warden, John Lacey) does not show any earthworks on the development site and none were observed during the work. The Old Rectory is an imposing building of the 18th century; records suggest that the current building was built by James Tindall, Rector 1817-1852 (Wootton and Lacey undated, 79). It has been suggested that the original rectory was located closer to Main Street and the current site may have been occupied by an older farm (*ibid.* 72).

In 2004, archaeological work took place during groundworks associated with the construction of two new dwellings on land belonging to the Old Rectory. The new dwellings had basements therefore required considerable reduction of the ground

level. During the groundworks for the building to the south of the Old Rectory, a burial was uncovered at a depth of 0.4m. There were no coffin nails or grave-goods and the skeleton was aligned E-W and clearly laid out on its back with the arms positioned over the lower torso. No dating evidence was retrieved; a fragment of medieval pottery was recovered close to the grave but not actually recovered from it. Further south, the remains of a second burial were discovered at a greater depth of 1.2m. Examination of the bones by Simon Chapman suggested that both skeletons were male. The first was thought to have been aged between his mid-twenties and early thirties, while the second was from an older individual, aged 50-55 years. A north-south aligned ditch was also identified.

The plot to the north of the Old Rectory produced evidence for further archaeological features, although unfortunately conclusive dating evidence was in short supply. A shallow circular feature, a narrow north-south aligned linear gully, and a substantial north-south orientated ditch with sloping sides and a rounded base, were identified. The ditch measured up to 3m wide and was 0.8m deep. Both features were filled with mid orange brown sandy silt. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the top of the ditch and burnt bone from the gully.

Archaeological Objectives

The main objective of the archaeological work was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any significant archaeology on the site in its cultural and environmental setting.

Through archaeological controlled stripping and investigation the objectives of the archaeological investigation were:

- : To identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits

- : To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works

- : To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works

- : To produce an archive and report of any results

Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2010) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008). *A Design Specification for Archaeological Work* was produced by ULAS prior to the archaeological work being undertaken.

The project involved the supervision of groundworks by an experienced professional archaeologist during the works. The groundworks consisted of topsoil stripping and

ground reduction. Two machines were utilised during the course of the work, a Kubota and a Bobcat E80, both with ditching bucket.

Results

The site was attended on the 2nd and 3rd November 2011, when the programme of work commenced with the removal of topsoil and vegetation. The topsoil consisted of dark brown, silty loam and was found to be thin, *c.*0.2m thick, with occasional brick fragments.

Due to the steepness of the slope, the machine driver had to maintain the safety and stability of the excavator during digging and therefore, following topsoil removal, the most effective way to check for archaeological deposits was to excavate 'trenches' or platforms across the side of the bank at intervals.

At the base of the slope, a 'trench' excavated across the west side of the new pond revealed the topsoil to be *c.*0.2m thick above a subsoil of dull orange brown sandy clay with frequent stones and gravel. Clean, undisturbed natural subsoil, a bright mid-orange brown sandy clay with frequent pebbles and fine gravel, was encountered at *c.* 0.4m below the former ground level. There was no evidence for any archaeological finds or features in this area.



Figure 3: Section through 'trench' at the base of the slope

A trench was also excavated half way up the slope, located approximately along the eastern side of the pond. The surface exposed by the topsoil strip consisted of grey clay with frequent stones. It was clearly disturbed re-deposited subsoil, since despite the compact consistency patches of modern debris were observed within it. The thickness of this deposit was 0.9m below which was a thin layer of dark grey silty loam, which was identified as buried topsoil. Underneath this layer, there was *c.*0.2m

of orange-brown sandy clay subsoil. The undisturbed natural subsoil was encountered at 1.2m below the stripped level in this area. It consisted of a layer of orange-brown sandy clay above clean blue/yellow clay, which was seen at the base of the excavation.



Figure 4: Section showing the depth of overburden (redeposited soils) over buried topsoil and natural subsoil (scale 0.5m). The trowel is sitting on the stripped surface.

Exploratory excavation at the top of the slope revealed similar strata; following the removal of *c.*0.2m of topsoil, mixed grey/brown sandy clay with frequent stones and pebbles and occasional brick rubble was exposed. A trial excavation into this substrate confirmed it to be re-deposited subsoil, which was observed to a depth of 0.5m; below which there were a series of natural clays to the base of the excavation. No deep excavations were planned for the top of the slope; only landscaping which would not affect any undisturbed ground.

The results clearly indicate that soil had been imported to this location and deposited, and the area was later partly landscaped. The current owner of the Old Rectory, Mr. Latham and, the Archaeological Warden for Mowsley, Mr Lacey, were both aware that soil moved during the construction of the new dwellings to the north and south of the Old Rectory had been dumped in this area. This was confirmed by satellite photographs from Google maps, which were taken during the work (2005-6) and depict the new dwelling to the north under construction (<http://maps.google.co.uk/>). A track evidently made by large vehicles can be seen running towards the pond site, which is covered in scrubby vegetation. Mounds of subsoil with visible wheel tracks can be seen just east of the pond site.

No archaeological features were identified during the work however a single sherd of medieval pottery, Chilvers Coton ware, dating from the 13th century and fragments of early modern brick and tile (Sawday, see Appendix) were recovered during the topsoil stripping. A worked flint described as a secondary bladelet dating from the Mesolithic (approximately ten to six thousand years ago) was also recovered (Cooper, see Appendix).

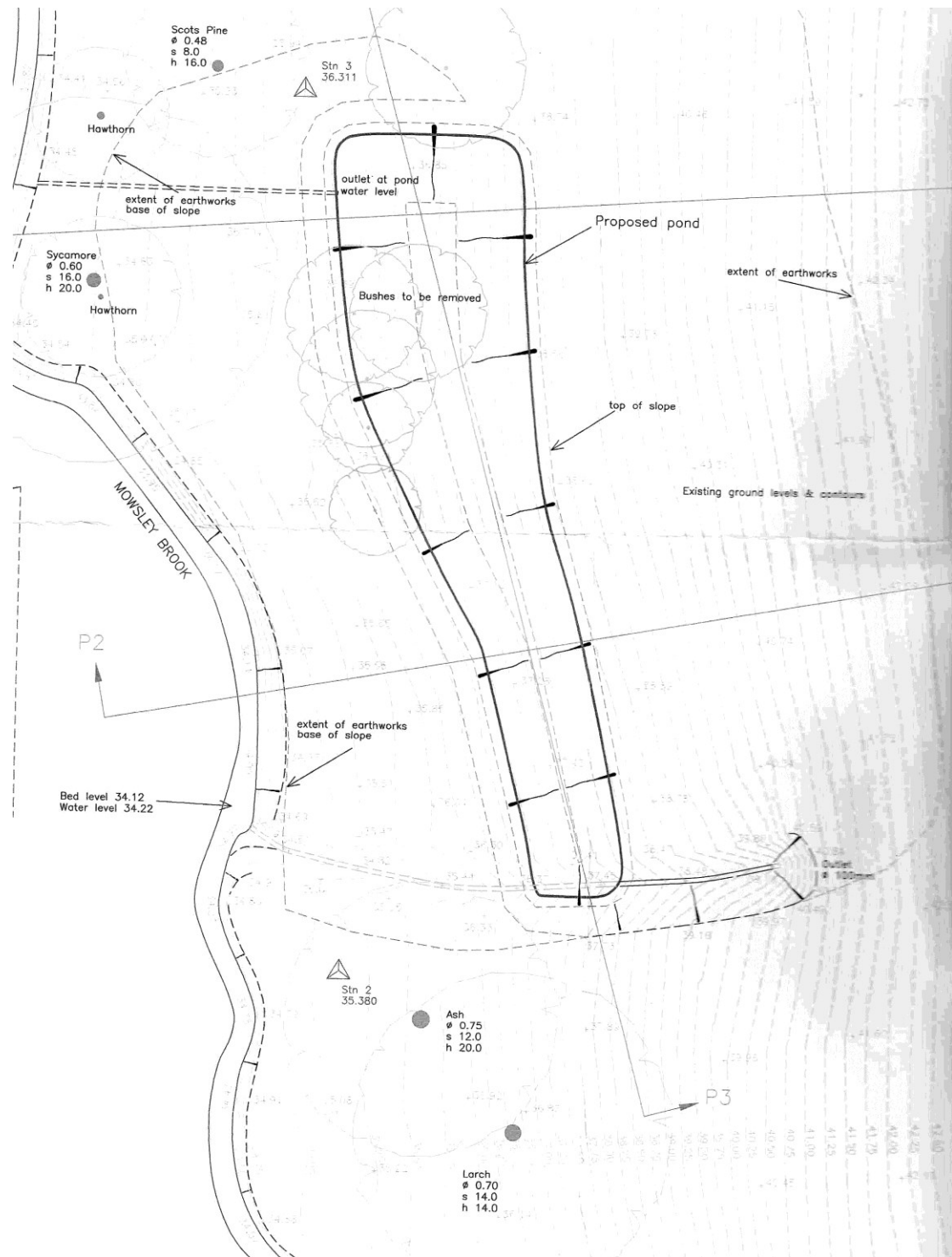


Figure 5: Plan indicating the location of the new pond (plan supplied by client) (NTS)

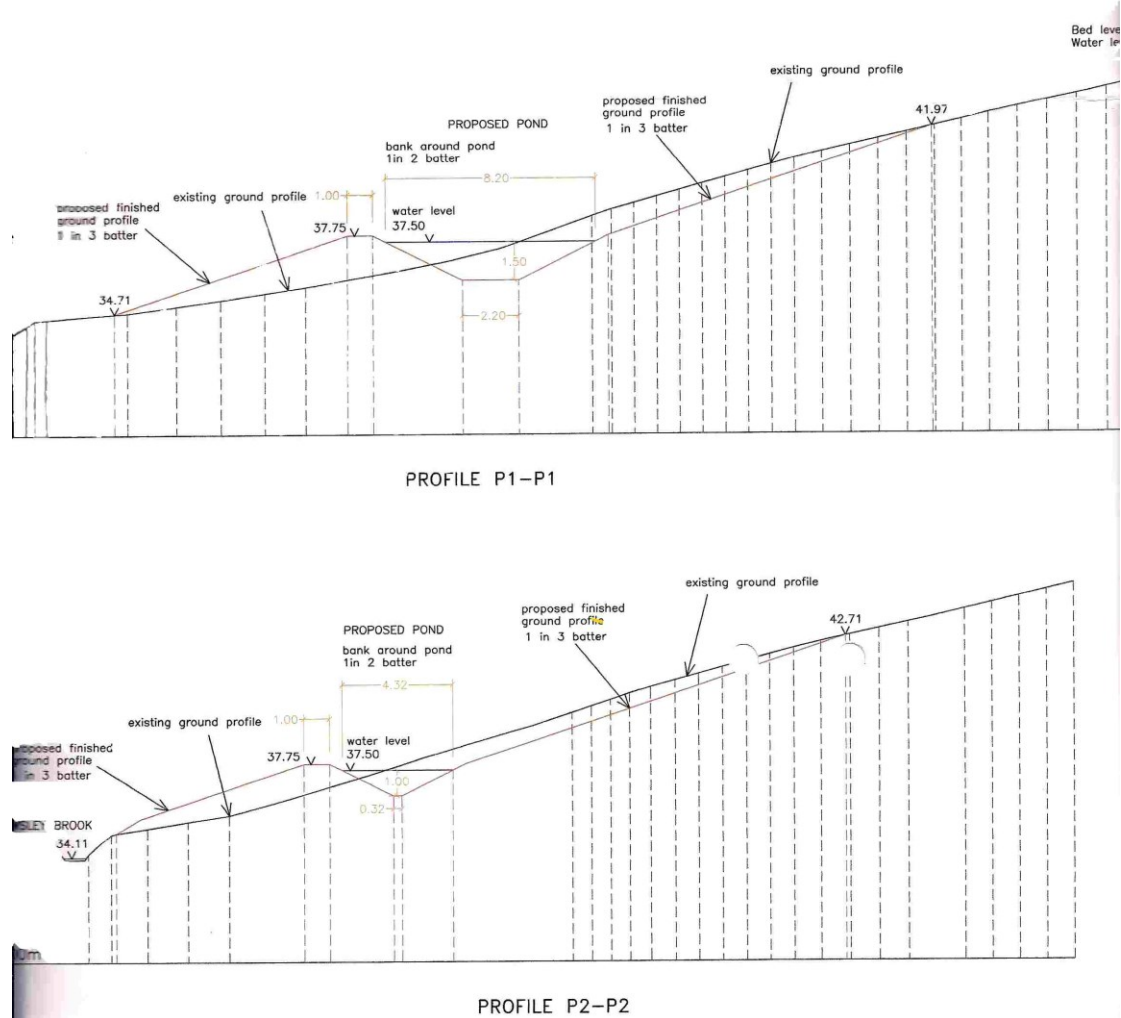


Figure 6: Profile for the new pond (plan supplied by client)

Conclusion

No archaeological features were identified during the investigations, which has confirmed that a large quantity of soil was moved to this location in the mid- 2000's during the construction of nearby new dwellings. A sherd of medieval pottery, post-medieval brick and a Mesolithic struck flint were recovered during topsoil stripping.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Paul Latham and Pete for their help, co-operation and interest during the watching brief. I would also like to thank John Lacey, who shared his

excellent local knowledge and kindly provided literature on the history and archaeology of Mowsley. Deborah Sawday identified the medieval pottery, brick and tile and the flint was examined by Lynden Cooper. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

References

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Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Services with the accession number X.A165 2011 and consists of the following:

Digital photographs

Black and white contact prints and negatives

Photo index

Site notes

Copy of report

Finds (1 sherd pottery, 1 flint, 1 fragments brick and 1 fragment of tile)

Report 2011-192

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07.12.2011

Appendix 1: The Post Roman Pottery And Brick by Deborah Sawday

The ceramic finds are listed below (Table 1). All were from unstratified contexts.

The Pottery

The pottery, one sherd, weighing 8 grams, was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group, (MPRG 1998), (MPRG, 2001) and the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999). The fabric, CC5, was described as Chilvers Coton B ware at the kiln site, (Mayes and Scott 1984), the inclusions including shale and sandstone, (Williams 1984, 196) and fabric STR 20 in the Warwickshire County type series. This pottery is dated generally from the later 13th century (Soden and Ratkai 1998).

The Ceramic Building Material

Two fragments of ceramic building material including a brick approximately 40 mm, 1½ inches thick, and a fragment of possible flat roof tile were recovered. The dimensions of the brick do not provide clear dating evidence, for instance bricks of a similar thickness have been dated from the 15th to the early 18th centuries at Coventry (Mason and Soden 2008, 34), whilst the fabric of both the brick and the possible tile suggest a post medieval or early modern date.

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Mayes, P., and Scott, K., 1984 *Pottery kilns at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton*. Soc. Medieval Archaeol. Mon. Ser. **10**.

Soden, I. and Ratkai, S., 1998. *Warwickshire Medieval and Post-Medieval Ceramic Type Series*. Unpublished manuscript held by Warwickshire Museum Archaeological Field Services.

Williams, D.F., 1984 'Appendix V Petrological Examination of Pottery Fabrics', in Mayes and Scott 1984, 196-197.

Table 1: The medieval and later pottery and ceramic building material by fabric, fragment numbers and weight (grams) by context.

Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos	Grams	Comments
POTTERY				
U/S	CC5 – Chilvers Coton 5	1	8	Body fragment, abraded,
CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL				
U/S	EA - Earthenware	1	736	Brick fragment, c.40 mm (1 ½ inches) thick. Moulded, hard fine red sandy fabric with worn rounded edges, and traces of mortar on two surfaces.
U/S	EA - Earthenware	1	57	Very fine hard red fabric, with two cut edges, possibly flat roof tile.

Site/ Parish: The Old Rectory, Mowsley, Leics. Accession No.: XA165 2011 Document Ref: mowsley2.docx Material: pottery & ceramic building material	Site Type: village core Submitter: J. Browning Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Identification: 7.12.11 Method of Recovery: watching brief Job Number: 12/114
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Appendix 2: The Flint. Identified by Lynden Cooper

The worked flint consisted of a secondary bladelet with slight patination of Mesolithic date.

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