University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation at Manor Holt, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire NGR: SK 588 138

Andrew Hyam

ULAS Report No. 2012-024

An Archaeological Evaluation at Manor Holt, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire

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For: William Davies Ltd

Approved by:

Signed: … **Date**: 07.02.2012

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An Archaeological Evaluation at Manor Holt, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire. NGR SK 588 138

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Summary

An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken at Manor Holt, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between the 24th and 26th of January 2012. Planning permission has been granted for residential development with associated landscaping and access road. Due to the location within an area of archaeological interest, the Planning Authority have requested that a programme of trial trenching take place to identify and locate any archaeological remains that may be affected by the development.

Ten 20m long by 1.6m wide trench were excavated across the proposed development site, most targeting anomalies highlighted in a geophysical survey. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the trenches. The anomalies were identified during the evaluation as geological differences in the natural substrata.

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under Accession Number X.A7.2012

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 evaluation consisting of ten 20m long by 1.6m wide trenches at Manor Holt, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire. Planning permission has been granted for residential development with associated landscaping and an access road.

When considering the planning application Charnwood Borough Council, recommended the requirement for a programme of archaeological work in the form of an archaeological evaluation which follows on from an initial desk-based assessment and a geophysical survey of the site (Hunt 2009; Marsh 2010). The work has been commissioned by William Davies Limited.

Background

The site lies at the south-eastern edge of Mountsorrel, Charnwood, Leicestershire on the western side of Leicester Road (formerly Loughborough Road), close to the Mountsorrel and Rothley junction of the A6 (Figs. 1 and 2). The proposed development site consists of a rectangular plot, oriented north-east to south-west and covers approximately 1.1 hectares. A large detached house, dating from the early 1920s, lies close to the north-east corner, with an overgrown garden to the east and a patio and parking area to the west (Figs. 3 and 4). The house was occupied until quite recently but is now empty. The remainder of the plot forms a large open, uncultivated

field. A small orchard ran along the south-western site boundary but, with the exception of one tree, this has now been removed.

The British Geological Survey South Sheet, Fourth Edition Solid, indicates that the underlying geology consists of Triassic mudstones (including Keuper Marl, Conglomerate and Rhaetic). The drift geology present is Alluvium with overlying soils known as Dunnington Heath consisting of reddish coarse and fine loam over clay soils. The site lies at a height of between 70m and 64m OD and falls from west to east towards the road.

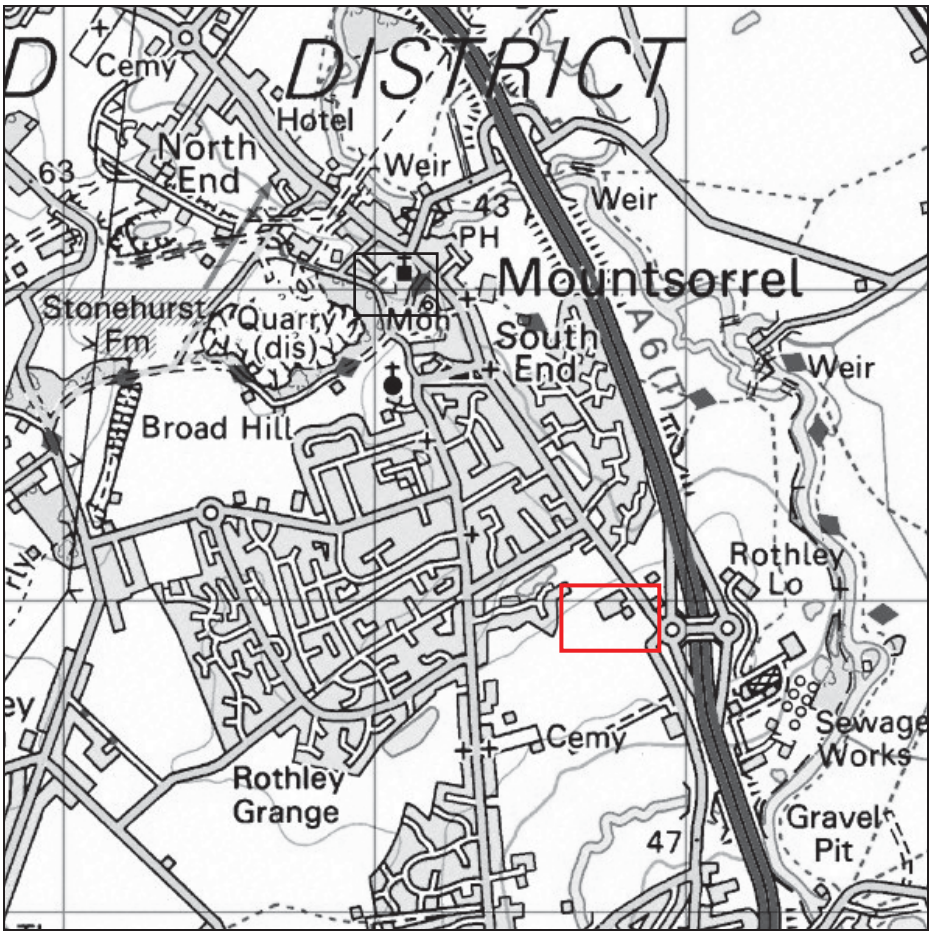


Figure 1. Site location

Site highlighted in red. North to top of map

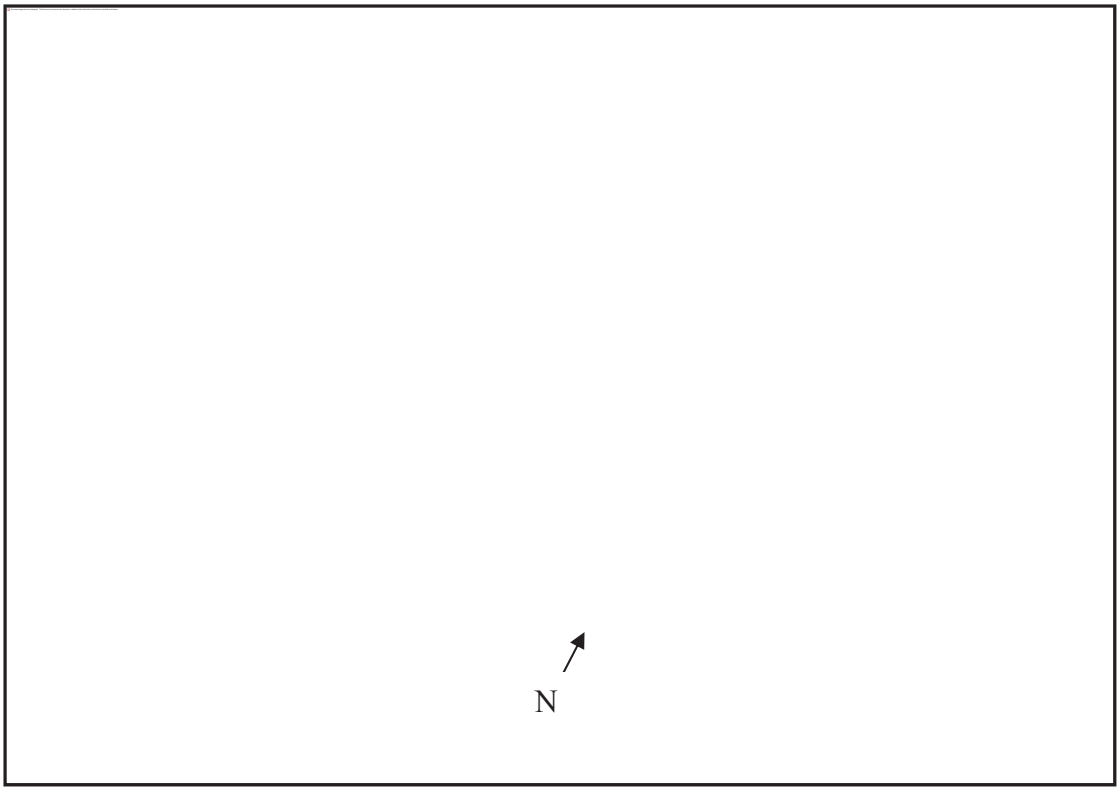


Figure 2. Site
Plan provided by developer.

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) and a geophysical survey have been undertaken of the area (Hunt 2009; Marsh 2010). The DBA identified that the application area lies close to sites of some archaeological significance, including many findspots for prehistoric artefacts (**MLE9122, MLE7411**, **MLE6046** & **MLE7421)** and is less than 500m to the west of Rothley Lodge Farm, which was excavated in 2005 and yielded Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts of national/regional importance (**MLE10532-MLE10535**). The geophysical survey indicated a high number of positive responses, often interpreted as pits, and one area anomaly and two linear cut features, all of possible archaeological origin.

Figure 3. Development site
Looking south, towards former area of orchard

Figure 4. Development site
Looking north. Picture taken in 2009 when house was in use

Objectives

As identified in the ULAS Design Specification for archaeological work the main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that can demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008).

Ten 20m long by 1.6m wide trenches were proposed and located to target a number of anomalies suggested by the geophysical survey (Fig. 5). Topsoil/modern overburden was removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All spoil heaps were inspected for unstratified archaeological material. All trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or the natural substratum in the absence of any archaeological deposits.

Trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located would be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

Each trench was recorded on a standard ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheet noting soil depths and descriptions. One longitudinal face and the base of each trench was recorded in this way. Sections of any excavated archaeological features would be drawn at an appropriate scale. Any drawn sections of archaeological features would also be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum, or a permanent fixed bench mark. Trench locations were recorded and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

A photographic record of the investigations was prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. Colour digital and black and white 35mm photographs were taken throughout the evaluation. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

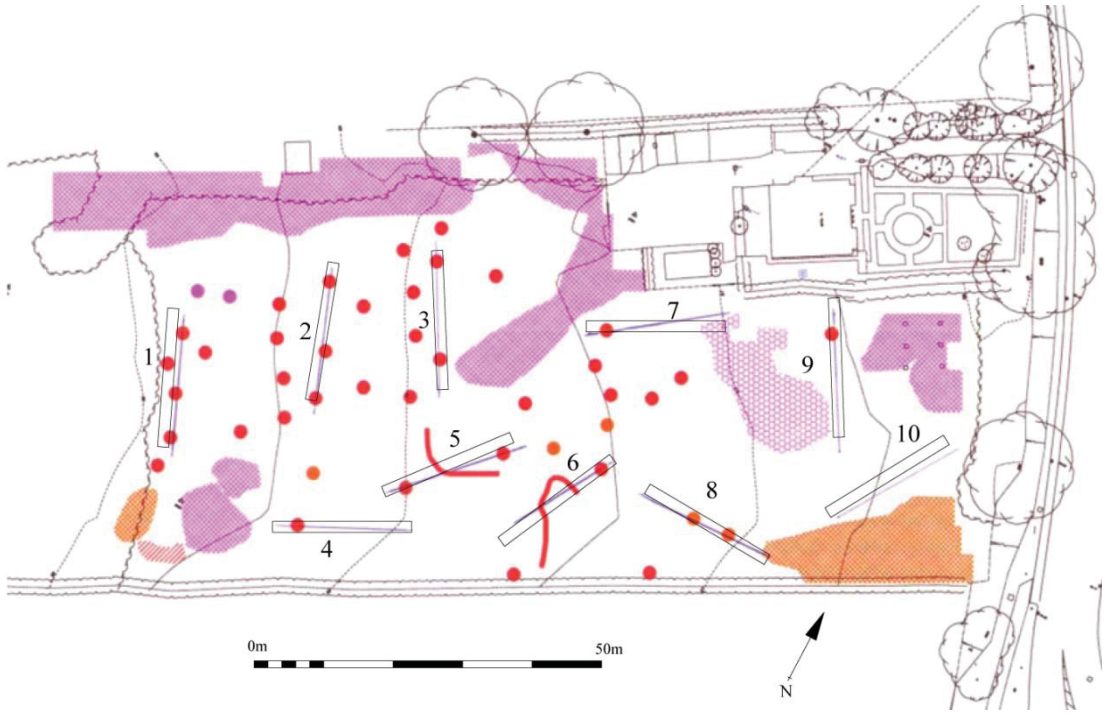


Figure 5. Trench locations
Modified from Stratascan survey

Results

Trench One

Located at the south-western end of the site alongside the former orchard area, this trench was set out on a north-west to south-east alignment. A series of geophysical anomalies, possibly pits, were noted in this area and the trench was targeted to examine these. Because of the proximity of a geotechnical pit the trench had to be moved 1.7m to the south-west. The move however was still calculated to cross the geophysical anomalies.

The topsoil consisted of a mid- reddish brown silty-clay with a lighter brown silty-clay subsoil below it. The subsoil had a slightly higher clay content than the topsoil and, with a maximum depth of only 50mm, formed more of an interface between topsoil and the natural substratum. The majority of the natural substratum consisted of clean mid- orangey red clay with occasional sub-rounded stones. There were however small patches of mid- brownish red slightly sandy-clay spread along the length of the trench. A 0.1m wide land drain made from a double row of pieces of local slate laid on edge cut partially into the natural ran from west to east across the north-western end of the trench (Fig. 6). A similarly constructed drain ran across the trench at right angles to it approximately three metres from the south-eastern end.

No archaeological features or deposits were seen in this trench.

Figure 6. Trench One
Looking south-west. 1m scales. Note slate drain in foreground

Trench Two

Located approximately 20m to the north-east of Trench 1 this trench followed a similar alignment and was again targeted to expose more possible pitting activity indicated by the discrete geophysical anomalies. The same topsoil and subsoil as in Trench 1 were observed and the same very thin layer of subsoil was noted. The western side of the trench for the first 15m had a natural substratum of clean mid-orangey red clay which changed along an east to west line to sandy clay with more frequent stones. Another pitched slate land drain was seen at the western end of the trench running down the slope of the field towards the north-east.

No archaeological features or deposits were seen in this trench.

Trench Three

This trench was located approximately 17m to the north-east of Trench 2 on a similar alignment. It contained the same topsoil and thin layer of subsoil as the previous two, and indeed all of the, trenches. The natural substratum consisted of alternating bands of clay and sandy clay running across the width of the trench. A modern, irregularly shaped shallow pit approximately 0.15m in depth was noted 8m from the eastern end of the trench. Excavating this feature recovered sherds of Willow pattern pottery, fragments of brick, thin metal wire and some pieces of glass bottle. A pitched slate drain ran across the western end of the trench and was seen to follow the same alignment as that seen in Trench 2.

No archaeological features or deposits were located in this trench.

Trench Four

Trench 4 was located adjacent to the south-eastern boundary of the site and to the south-east of Trenches 2 and 3. It was located to investigate a single discrete geophysical anomaly in the form of a possible pit. The trench contained the same topsoil and thin layer of subsoil as all of the previous trenches and had a natural substratum composed of mid- brownish red slightly sandy-clay along the entire length of the trench. No drains or other features were noted in this trench.

No archaeological features or deposits were seen in this trench.

Trench Five

Trench 5 was located between Trenches 3 and 4 on a roughly north to south alignment and targeted a curvilinear anomaly identified in the geophysical survey as a possible cut feature. Once again the same description of topsoil and subsoil were encountered down to the natural substrata which consisted of sandy clay with a band of similar sandy clay but with many more stones running across the middle of the trench. The southern boundary of this interface between the two naturals was very sharp and may account for the geophysical anomaly (Fig. 7). A ceramic land drain ran from the south-western corner of the trench towards the north-east.

No archaeological features or deposits were located in this trench.

Figure 7. Trench 5
1m scales. Note cut for land drain in foreground

Trench Six

As in Trench 5 this trench was located to investigate another curvilinear geophysical anomaly. The topsoil and subsoil descriptions matched those noted elsewhere on site. The natural substrata consisted of clear bands of clay, sandy clay and sandy gravel which again could account for the geophysical response. A ceramic land drain and a pitched slate drain ran across the trench from south-west to north-east.

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.

Trench Seven

Trench 7 was located to the south-east of the concrete hardstanding belonging to the house. A single discrete geophysical anomaly had been identified towards the south-western end of the proposed trench. Alternating bands of clay and sandy-clay were observed but no archaeological features. Running across the trench from north-west to south-east below the topsoil was a 0.1m thick band of mill waste with concrete edging stones. This matches the approximate position of a trackway noted in the DBA (Hunt 2009).

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.

Trench Eight

Trench 8 was laid out on an east to west alignment approximately level with Trench 7 but on the south-eastern side of the property. Two discrete geophysical anomalies were located within this area. The same topsoil and subsoil types as elsewhere were noted as were alternating bands of natural substrata. A pitched slate drain ran across the trench from south-west to north-east.

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.

Trench Nine

Trench 9 was located to the south-east of the house on a north-west to south-east alignment. A pitched slate drain was observed running across the trench cutting through the alternating bands of natural substrata (Fig. 8). A storm drain, or sewer pipe, ran from the direction of the house towards the eastern corner of the site.

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.

Trench Ten

Trench 10 was placed in the eastern corner of the site. The presence of a geotechnical pit meant that it had to be moved 1m to the north-east. The same topsoil and subsoil descriptions as in the other trenches were noted but at the northern end of the trench, nearest the front boundary hedge the subsoil was significantly thicker than elsewhere. A wide band of sandy clay ran from east to west across the mainly clay substratum.

Three land drains and one pitched slate drain were seen running towards the north-east. The drain from the house, seen in Trench 9, was also observed in this trench.

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.

Figure 8. Partially excavated slate drain, Trench 9.
1m scale

Discussion

Despite the potential for archaeological features on this site none was observed. The variable nature of the natural substrata seen across the site clearly explains the anomalies noted in the geophysical survey. The pitched slate drains running across the site indicate that the area has had some drainage problems due to the heavy clay substratum. The drains may have been laid possibly around the time of enclosure in the late 18th century. The ceramic land drains noted along the eastern boundary may be from a later episode of draining.

Archive

The archive consists of:
This report,
Ten ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheets,
Two digital photographic record sheets,
One 35mm black and white photographic record sheets,
Two contact sheets of 54 colour digital photographs,
Two 35mm black and white contact sheets (12 pictures on one sheet, 8 on the other),
35mm black and white negatives,
One CD of this report and the digital photographs.

Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by A.Hyam and M. Morris. The project was managed by P. Clay.

Bibliography

Brown, D., 2008 *Standard and guidance for the preparation of Archaeological Archives* (Institute for Archaeologists).

Hunt, L., 2009 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for land at Manor Holt, Leicester Road, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire NGR: SK 588 138* ULAS Report 2009-099

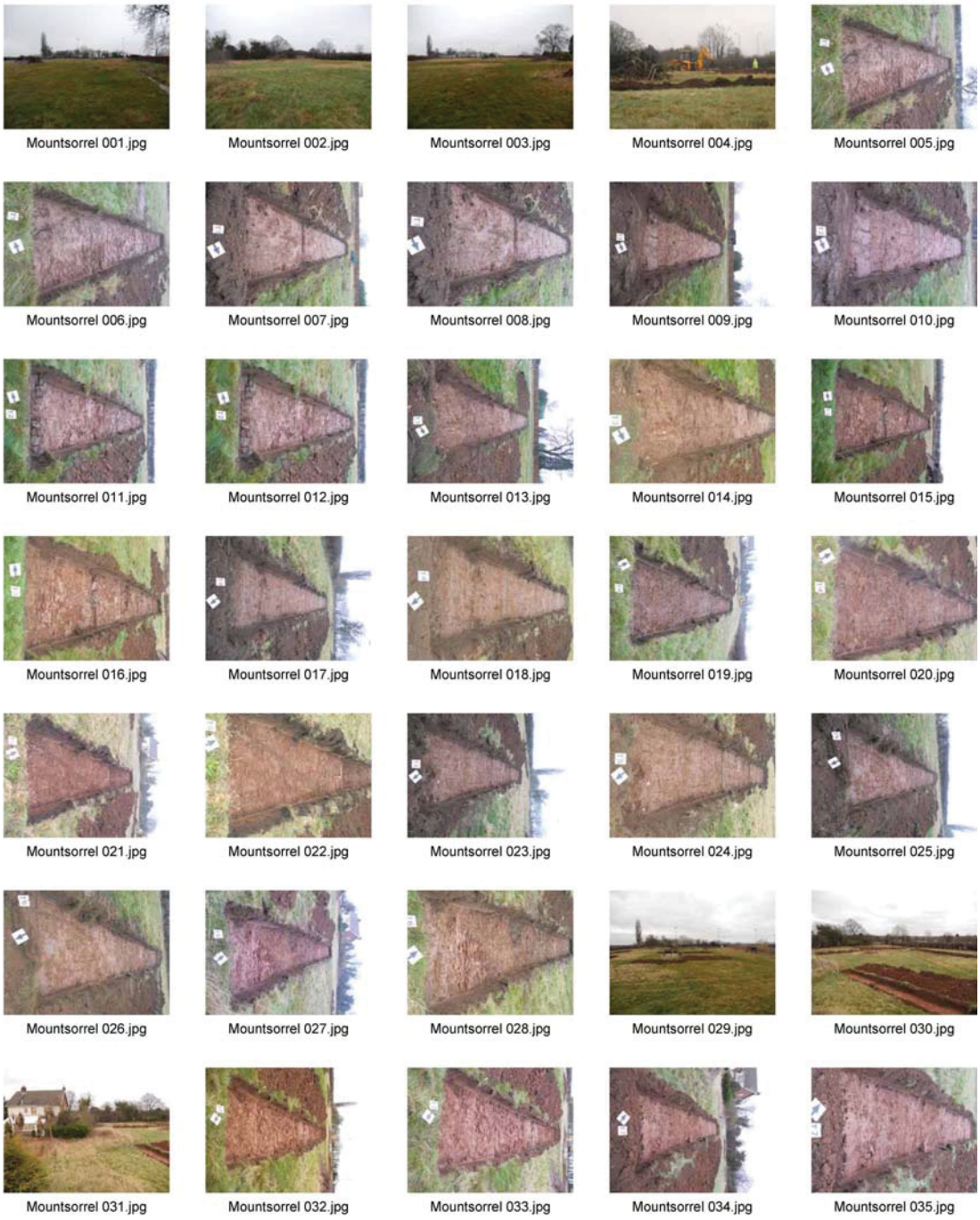
Marsh, B., 2010 *Geophysical Survey: Mountsorrel, Leicestershire*. Stratascan Report J2666

ULAS, 2011 Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work. *Manor Holt, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire*. 2011

Appendix 1. Trench measurements

Trench No	Length (m)	Width (m)	Min Trench Depth (m)	Max Trench Depth (m)	Av. Topsoil thickness (m)	Av. Subsoil thickness (m)
1	20.10	1.60	0.20	0.46	0.26	0.04
2	19.80	1.60	0.30	0.50	0.28	0.05
3	20.50	1.60	0.34	0.41	0.29	0.05
4	19.80	1.60	0.26	0.36	0.23	0.04
5	20.00	1.60	0.35	0.50	0.34	0.05
6	19.90	1.60	0.24	0.33	0.21	0.04
7	20.00	1.60	0.22	0.35	0.20	0.04
8	20.00	1.60	0.24	0.40	0.23	0.05
9	20.10	1.60	0.28	0.42	0.28	0.05
10	20.00	1.60	0.31	0.45	0.26	0.11

Appendix 2. Digital photographs



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Appendix 3. OASIS Information

Project Name	Manor Holt, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire
Project Type	Trial trench evaluation
Project Manager	P Clay
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	DBA, geophysical survey
Current Land Use	Garden/field
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	As a condition
Position in the Planning Process	Granted
Site Co ordinates	SK 588 138
Start/end dates of field work	24.1.2012 – 26.1.2012
Archive Recipient	LCC
Study Area	1.1ha

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