



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation
at Manor House Spinney, Newton
Harcourt Manor, Wistow Road, Newton
Harcourt, Leicestershire.
NGR: SP 639 966**



Sophie Clarke


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**An Archaeological Evaluation
at Manor House Spinney, Newton Harcourt Manor,
Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire**

NGR: SP 639 966

Sophie Clarke

For: Mr and Mrs Goddard.

Approved by
Signed:  Date: 21.11.2011.
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An Archaeological Evaluation at Manor House Spinney, Newton Harcourt Manor, Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire. NGR: SP 639 966.

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Summary

An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken within Newton Harcourt Spinney, located to the south of Newton Harcourt Manor House, Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire, by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 31st October- 1st November 2011. Three trial trenches were excavated in response to a planning application for the proposed construction of a new dwelling on the site (Planning Application number 11/00734/FUL).

The trenches were positioned to target a series of upstanding earthwork remains which are located within the proposed development area and have previously been identified as possible platforms and ditches associated with the landscape of the shrunken medieval village of Newton Harcourt.

No deposits of archaeological significance were revealed during the course of the evaluation. The most-pronounced of the earthwork ditches was revealed as an infilled drainage ditch, with a circa 19th-century ceramic land-drain located towards the base, likely to transport ground water from Wistow Road into the River Sence. The presence of the ditch is likely to have created the impression of a 'platform' within the undulating landscape leading down to the river bank; there is no evidence for up-cast earth, nor an artificial platform of any kind. The remains of a gravel path, which appears on early 20th-century OS maps, were found within the base of a shallower hollow channel to the east, which may have been formed through the maintenance of the pathway during its period of use.

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums Service under Accession Number X.A158.2011.

Introduction

In accordance with PPS5 (Planning and the Historic Environment, 2010), this document presents the results of an archaeological field evaluation (AFE) carried out within Manor House Spinney, located to the south of Newton Harcourt Manor House, Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire, at National Grid Reference SP 639 966 (Figure 1). The evaluation was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services in response to Planning Application No. 11/00734/FUL, for the construction of a new dwelling within the grounds of the Grade II listed manor house.

Following Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) Policy HE6, Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET), as archaeological advisors to the planning authority, required an evaluation by trial trenching, in order to clarify the archaeological potential of the site.

The proposed development site is located on low-lying land at the extreme south of the Conservation Area and at the southern edge of the SMV earthworks, adjacent to the River Sence. Survey of the earthworks by RF Hartley in the 1980s shows a number of earthworks within the proposed development area, including a platform upon which the proposed new structure will stand.

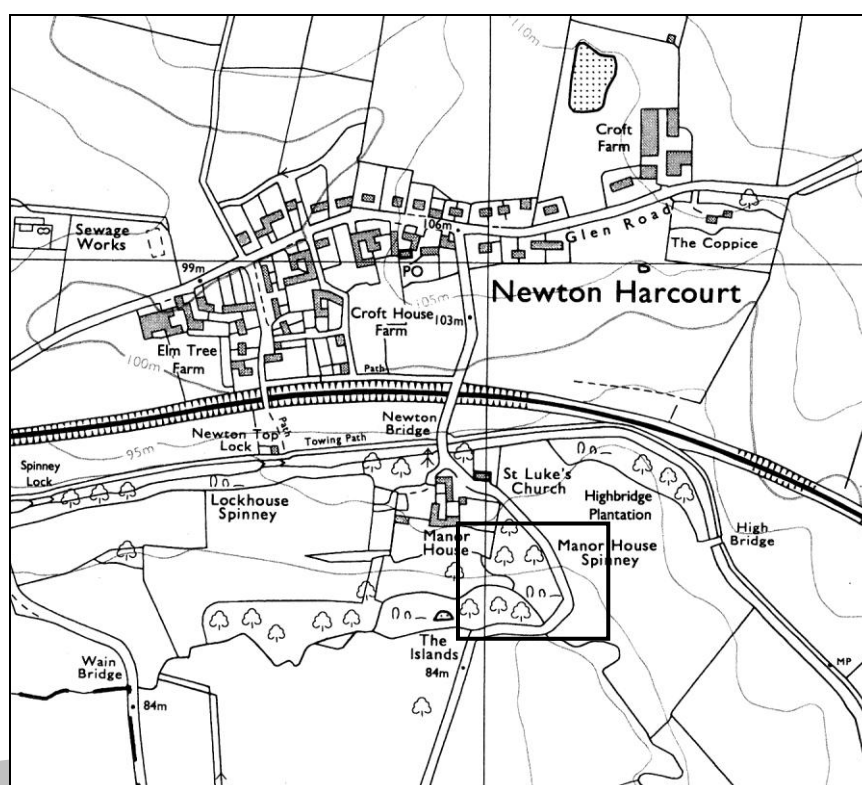


Figure 1. Location of site (in box)

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Background

An archaeological desk-based assessment prepared by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS; Clarke 2011) indicated that the site lies within the medieval village core of Newton Harcourt, within the curtilage of the Grade II listed, post-medieval manor house, which is likely to have replaced an earlier building. The area is rich in upstanding archaeological remains, which are likely to represent the shrinkage of the medieval village. Earthworks recorded within Manor House Spinney by RF Hartley in the 1980s are less well-understood and these have been variously interpreted as the remains of building platforms, or landscape features relating to earlier water-courses and/or quarrying activity.

In addition to the potential for the presence of medieval remains within the development area, the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) has records of a Roman flagon recovered from the River Sence to the west, and a 3rd century coin from Glen Road to the north, indicating the presence of Roman activity in the vicinity.

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation, as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological work (WSI; ULAS 2011) were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits identified by the geophysical survey.
- 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 archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development. From this an appropriate method of dealing with any archaeological deposits can be formulated or an appropriate mitigation strategy developed.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will 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).

Two trenches measuring up to 30m by 1.6m and one trench measuring up to 15m by 1.6m were examined to provide an approximately 7% sample of the proposed house footprint (including a substantial construction margin surrounding it), and were positioned to target the earthwork 'platform' recorded by the 1980s earthwork survey and the undulating features of the landscape surrounding this.

Topsoil and subsoil 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 to a width of 1.6m and down to the top of archaeological deposits or the natural substratum in the absence of any archaeological deposits. After recording, the trenches were backfilled and levelled during the course of the evaluation.

Trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located were 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. 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.

Results

The three evaluation trenches were laid out to provide the best possible coverage of the application site. Restrictions on available space, due to mature trees and tree stumps within the spinney, were problematic, resulting in slight modification to the original location plan submitted (Figures 2 and 3 below).

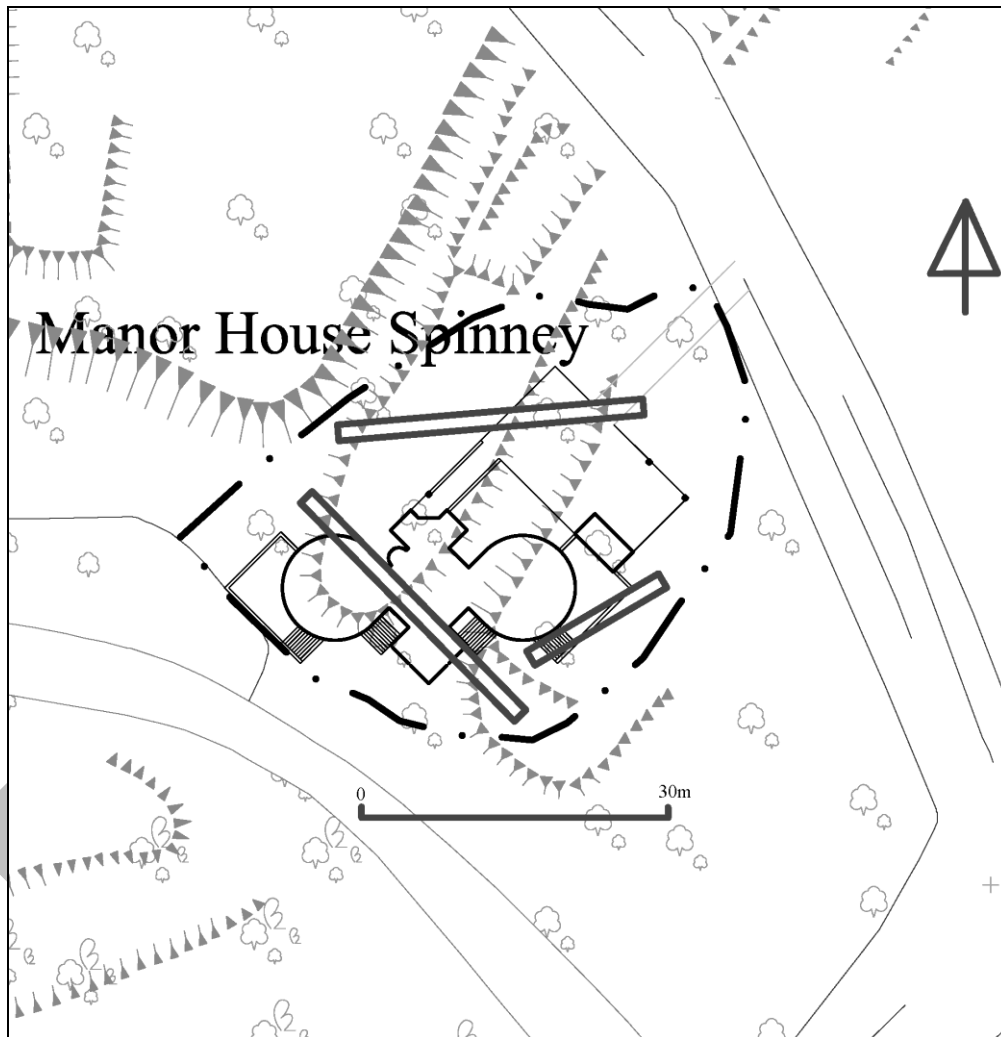


Figure 2. Proposed trench location plan (from WSI 12/133).

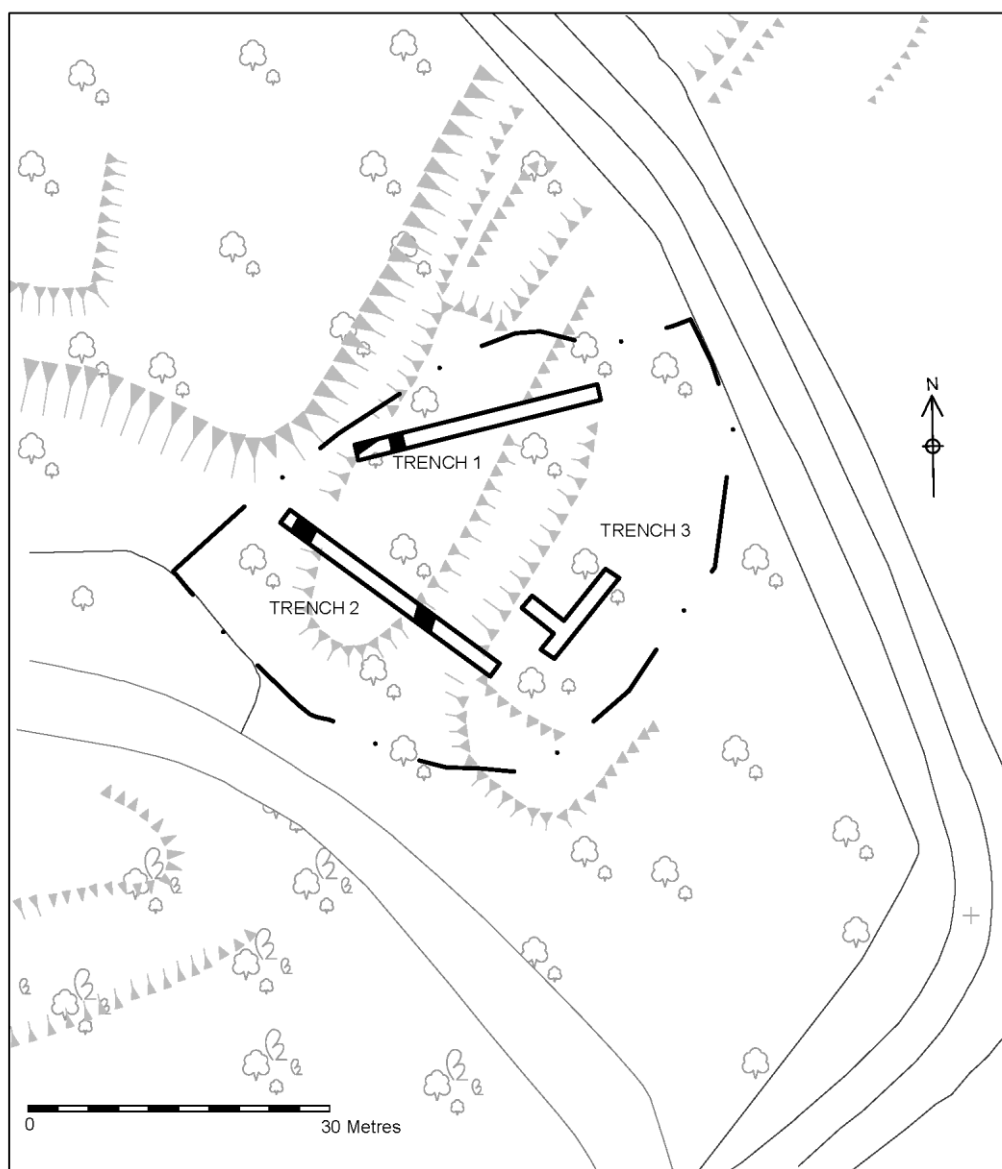


Figure 3. Final trench location plan.

Trench 1 (Figure 4)

Trench 1 was located in the northern part of the application area, aligned roughly south-west to north-east, measuring approximately 25m long by 1.6m wide. Natural subsoil, consisting mainly of greyish, dark-yellow sandy clay was revealed between *c.*0.3m and 0.5m below the present ground level (*c.*86m aOD), becoming gradually deeper towards the north-eastern end, following the contours of land. Topsoil consisted of a thin layer (0.1m-0.16m) of dark-brown, silty loam, consisting of decayed organic material, which overlay a subsoil layer of orangey-grey silty clay. At the extreme south-western end of the trench, topsoil and subsoil layers were found to contain an abundance of brick fragments, which appeared to have been recently deposited in order to fill the hollow channel into which the trench had been excavated (fig. 3, above). The channel is said to be prone to occasional water-logging (Mr. Goddard, pers. comm.), and it is likely that the bricks were deposited in order to consolidate the ground surface.

Approximately 3.5m from the south-western end of the trench, within the interface between the topsoil and subsoil layers, was a shallow deposit of gravel, measuring approximately 1m wide. The gravel was loosely contained within a matrix of yellowish orange sand and appeared to represent the remains of path, on the same north/south alignment as a similar, yet more compact deposit (2), recorded within Trench 2 (see below and Figure 3, above). A path in a similar position was recorded on the 1903 and 1929 OS survey maps of the area (Figure 5, below), but was not depicted on the later map of 1955.



Figure 4. Trench 1, looking north-east, with area of root disturbance in foreground and consolidated area to left hand side.

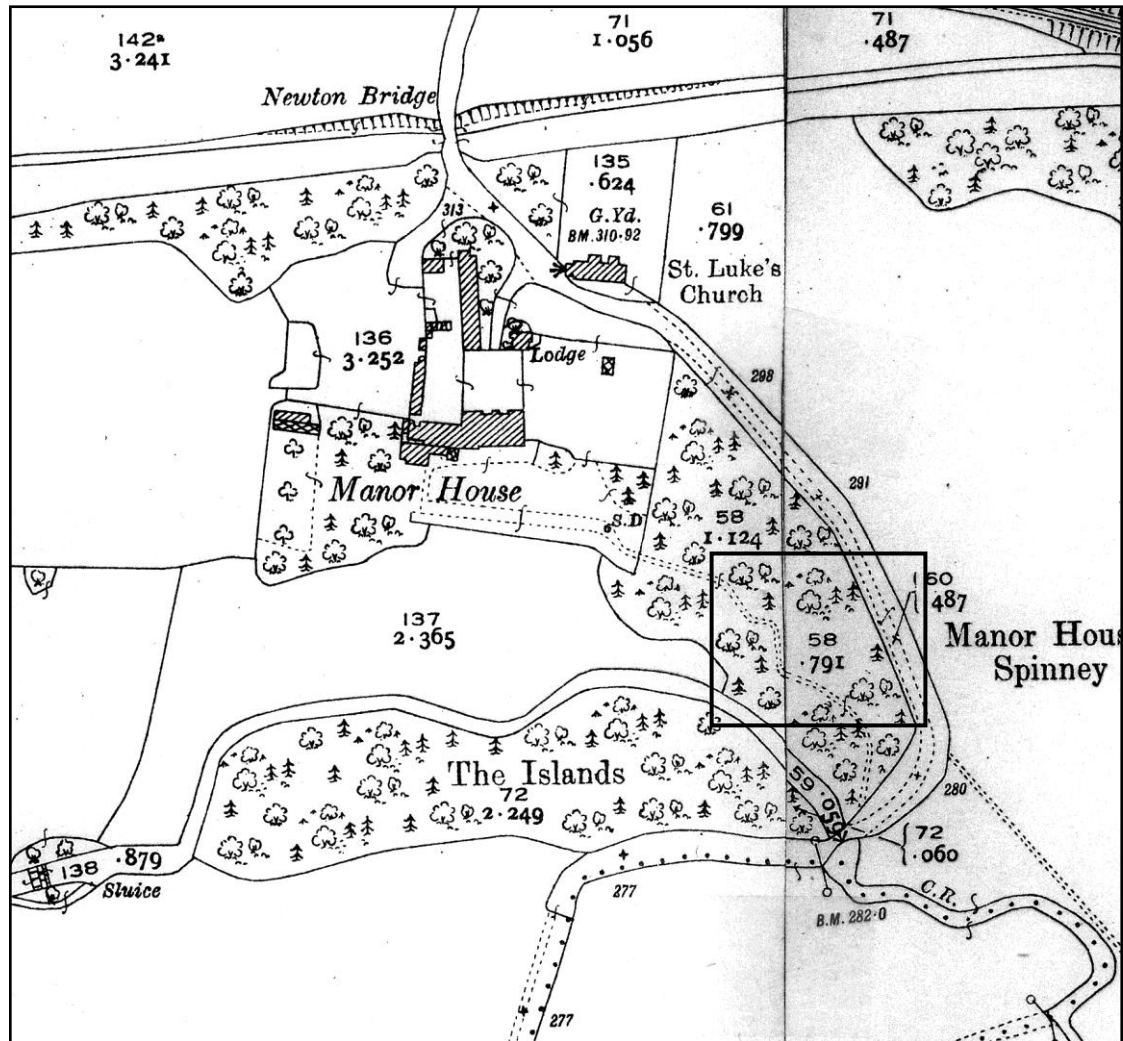


Figure 5. Extract from 1930 OS maps XXXVII.16 and XXXVIII.13, with path through site marked.

Trench 2 (Figures 6-11)

The second trench was located towards the western part of the development area and was aligned north-west to south-east to target a pair of possible earthwork platforms, defined by hollow courses on either side. The trench measured 1.6m wide by approximately 26m in length, shorter than the intended 30m trench, due to the restrictions presented by the trees on the site.

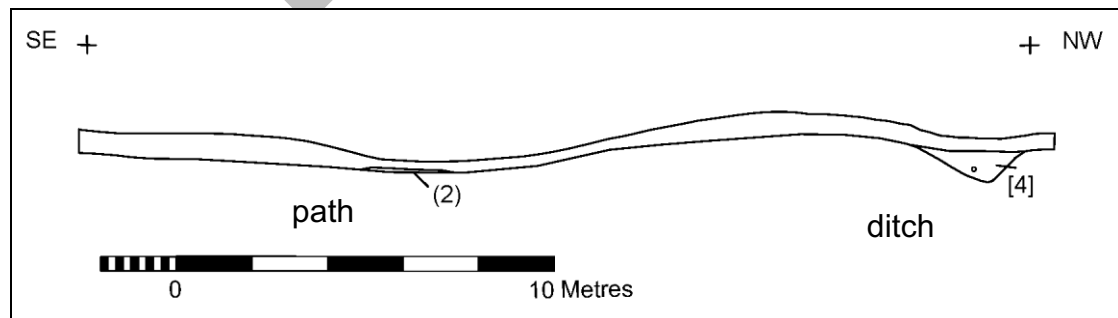


Figure 6. Profile drawing of Trench 2.

Figure 5 above, shows the section of Trench 2, revealing the undulating profile of the ground levels in this area and giving an indication of how the landscape features may have been formed.

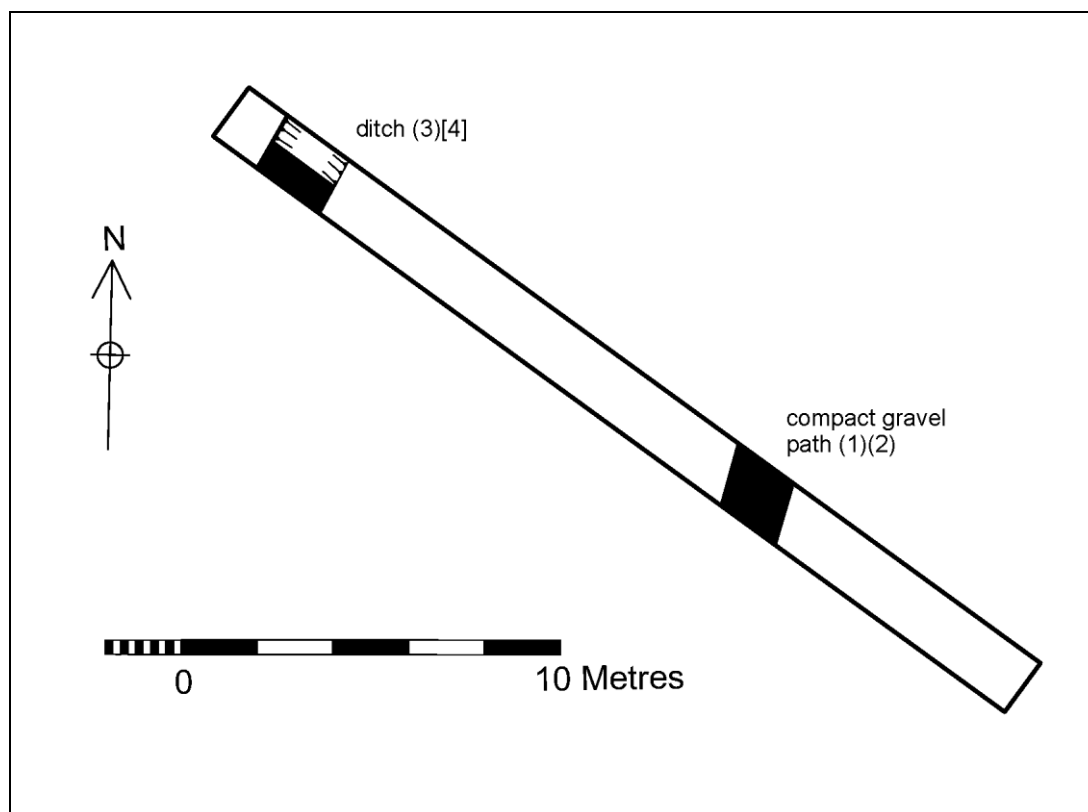


Figure 7. Plan drawing of Trench 2.

Towards the south-eastern end of the trench, a linear deposit of compact gravel within a matrix of orangey sand (2) was observed to overlie the natural clay, within the base of a hollow channel which was previously recorded through earthwork survey. Overlying (2) was a thin layer of looser gravel and silt, which contained fragments of brick and occasional sherds of early 20th-century china (not retained). The gravel deposits were aligned towards a similar deposit located in Trench 1 and may represent the remains of the path which appears on the OS maps between 1903 and 1929 (see figure 5, above). Topsoil across the trench generally measured between 0.2m and 0.3m deep, but was thinner above the path, representing the shallower accumulation of humic material following its disuse.

The date for the laying of the path is not known; the hollow channel recorded through earthwork survey during the 1980s was not readily identifiable on the ground as such at the time of this evaluation. The line of the path did not correspond with the line of the channel as recorded and its presence within the dip in the landscape may therefore be misleading.

A gentle upwards slope on the western side of the path appeared to represent a natural rise in the ground level. This was interrupted by a linear feature [4], interpreted as a silted-up drainage ditch, remaining visible as a hollow channel which runs across the site from north-east to south-west towards the River Sence. The ditch measured

approximately 2m wide and 1.2m deep, containing a single, homogeneous fill of greyish-brown, silty clay, with rare fragments of brick within. Contained within the fill, approximately 1m below the ground surface, was a ceramic, tubular land-drain with a circular, flat-based profile, possibly dating to the late 19th century. The ditch is likely to represent a redundant drainage channel, taking ground-water from Wistow Road and possibly from the fields beyond, into the river. Although the land-drain appeared to be blocked, and the ditch has been allowed to silt-up, the hollow channel is still prone to episodic water-logging, hence the area of consolidation noted within Trench 1 (see above). Just to the east of the evaluation area, an open drainage ditch leading into the Sence has been kept open.



Figure 8. Trench 2, looking south-east.



Figure 9. Trench 2, looking north-west.



Figure 10. Gravel path, with silty layer above. Looking south-west.



Figure 11. Drainage ditch, looking south-west.

Trench 3 (Figure 11)

Trench 3 was situated in the eastern part of the evaluation area and was excavated as a T-shape due to the density of the tree coverage in this area, to provide a total coverage of approximately 24 square metres. Topsoil measured between 0.2m and 0.3m deep, but in this area there was a thick layer of subsoil, measuring between 0.3 and 0.5m deep, which was not seen in other parts of the site. The subsoil layer consisted of very compact and dry, mid-greyish-orange, silty clay, with a diffuse interface between this and the natural clay substratum recorded at the base of the trench. This layer appeared to have been formed through natural processes, with no evidence of human occupation or debris contained within it. No archaeological features or deposits were revealed within the base of the trench, which was located between 0.42 and 0.8m below the ground surface.



Figure 11. Trench 3, looking north-east.

Discussion

The evaluation trenches were located across the application area in order to provide a reasonable coverage of the site and assess the potential for archaeological survival.

Trench 2 was positioned on the western side of the proposed development area, at an angle which was at right angles to the line of two earthwork ‘platforms’ which appeared to be defined by a pair of hollow channels. Trenching revealed that the westernmost channel comprises a drainage ditch, likely to lead from Wistow Road towards the River Sence. A *c.* 19th-century ceramic land-drain had been laid towards the base of the ditch, which appears to have been allowed to silt-up after this time. No dating evidence was obtained from the back-fill of the ditch, although this did contain the occasional fragment of brick, and no date for the excavation of the ditch could be ascertained.

Further to the east, the remains of a compact gravel path were found within the base of the second hollow channel; similar remains found within Trench 1, indicated the former presence of a path through the spinney, aligned roughly north-north-west/south-south-east. No dating evidence was obtained from the gravel deposits, but map evidence indicates the presence of a path in a similar position, certainly between 1903 and 1930, but which appears to have fallen out of use by 1955. The depth of the

topsoil layer overlying the path was much thinner than elsewhere along the line of the trench, reflecting the period of time during which the path was in use. The line of the path as mapped does not appear to correspond with the layout of the earthworks as recorded by Hartley during the 1980s, and these were not so clearly defined on the ground as on the survey drawing. Although it is feasible that hollow features previously noted on the site may have silted-up since initial recording and are no longer visible, it is also quite possible that the less-well defined of the two hollow features recorded within the spinney may have been created through the maintenance of the pathway through it.

The evaluation has indicated that no archaeological deposits of particular significance are present within the proposed development area. The two features found during the course of the fieldwork are likely to represent drainage and landscaping works dating to the late 19th or early 20th century and as such are not considered to be of particular archaeological significance. The lack of ceramic material or other stray finds within the topsoil and subsoil layers is perhaps also indicative of a general absence of human domestic activity in the area.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by Sophie Clark and Mathew Morris. ULAS would like to thank Mr Anthony Goddard for his co-operation and assistance during the work. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

Site Archive and Results

The archive consists of:

This report,

3 pro-forma trench recording sheets,

1 A2 permagraph sheet with plan and section drawings for Trench 2

1x 35mm black and white negative film and corresponding contact sheet,

7 colour digital photographs,

Photographic record sheets,

1 compact disc of this report and the digital photographs.

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums Service under the archaeological accession number X.A158.2011. A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. An OASIS record will also be produced and this report will be uploaded on to the Archaeology Data Service website.

Bibliography

Clarke, S., 2011 *An archaeological desk-based assessment for land at The Manor House, Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire (SP 639 966)* ULAS Report 2011-139

IfA, 2008 *Codes of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation.*

ULAS, 2011 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work: Land at The Manor House, Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire 12/133*

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21.11.2011

Appendix I OASIS Information

OASIS INFORMATION	
Project Name	Manor House Spinney, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	R Buckley
Project Supervisor	S Clarke
Previous/Future work	none, unknown future work
Current Land Use	Spinney
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	Pre-determination evaluation
Position in the Planning Process	Preliminary
Site Co ordinates	SK 639 966
Start/end dates of field work	31.10.2011- 01.11.2011
Archive Recipient	LCCHNET
Study Area	0.4ha

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