



# University of Leicester

## Archaeological Services

**An Archaeologically Controlled  
Topsoil Strip and Watching Brief  
on Land at Mill Road,  
Rearsby, Leicestershire  
(SK 647 144)**

**Gerwyn Richards**



ULAS Report No 2011-119  
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**An Archaeologically Controlled Topsoil Strip  
& Watching Brief  
On Land at Mill Road,  
Rearsby, Leicestershire.  
(NGR SK 647 144)**

**Gerwyn Richards**

**Planning Application: P/07/2604/2**

**For: JS Bloor (Measham) Ltd.**

Approved by:

**Signed:**



**Date:** ...07/11/2011.....

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**An Archaeologically Controlled Topsoil Strip & Watching Brief on Land at Mill Lane, Formally Part of Rearsby House Farm, Rearsby, Leicestershire (SK 647 144)**

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**Gerwyn Richards**

**Summary**

*University of Leicester Archaeological Services was commissioned by JS Bloor (Measham) Ltd to undertake an archaeologically controlled topsoil strip and watching brief during groundworks in advance of the construction of new residential units on land at Mill Lane, Rearsby, Leicestershire.*

*The proposed development area had been identified as being of archaeological potential, located within the historic settlement core of the village. Monitoring of the excavation of the footing trenches of plots 7, 8, & 9 revealed extensive quarrying, possibly medieval in date, but also more recent ground disturbance.*

*The controlled strip of plots 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, & 36 uncovered a number of archaeological deposits including a hearth base dating from the 9th-12th century. Environmental evidence indicates the hearth base was associated with malting for brewing.*

*The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, under the accession number X.A38. 2011.*

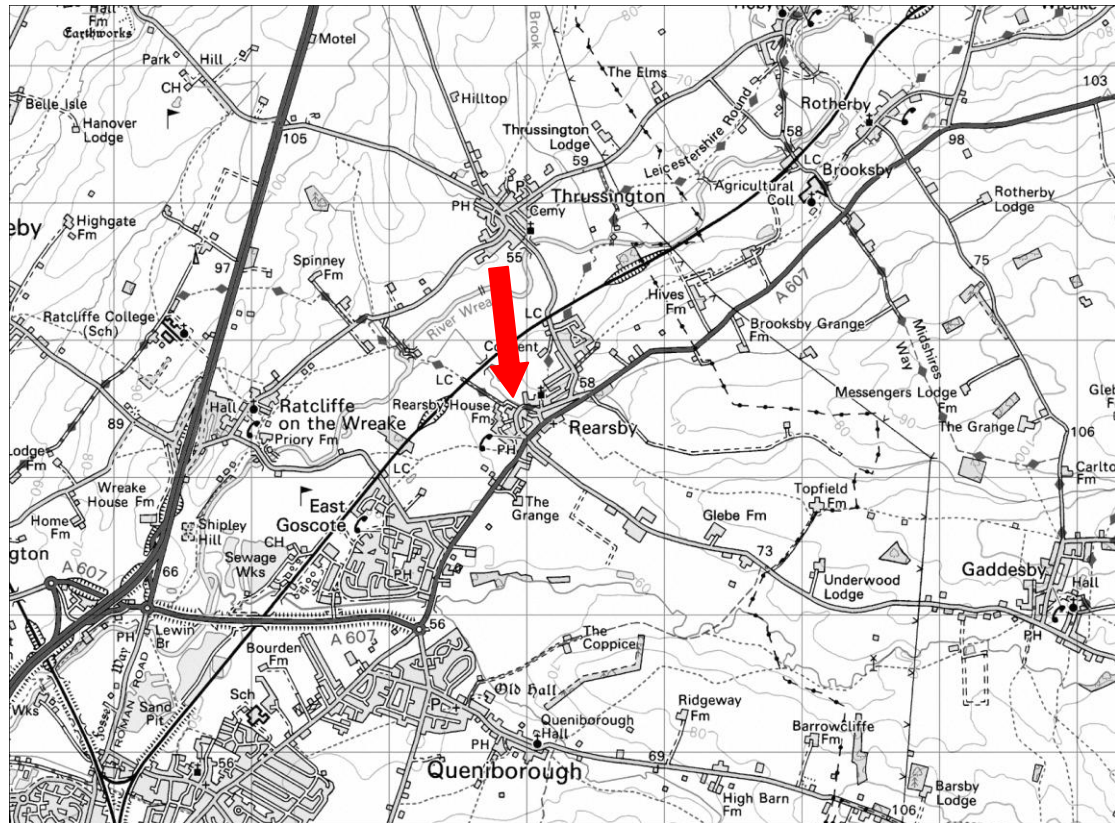
**1. Introduction**

University of Leicester Archaeological Services was commissioned by JS Bloor (Measham) Ltd to undertake archaeological works in advance of the proposed development in Rearsby. Planning permission has been granted for the re-development of the former agricultural site and for the construction of 29 new residential units (Planning Application No P/07/2604/2) on land adjacent to number 27 Mill Lane, Rearsby Leicestershire (SK 647 144; *Figure 1*). The proposed development area is located on land formerly part of Rearsby House Farm.

The Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council as advisor to Charnwood Borough Council had advised that the proposed works will have an impact upon buried archaeological remains. In view of this a programme of archaeological attendance was undertaken. This consisted of a controlled overburden strip within the footprint of plots 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, & 36 and a watching brief carried out during the excavation of footing trenches for plots 7, 8, & 9 (*Figure 2*). This work followed Planning Policy Statement 5 (*Planning and the Historic Environment*) (Department for Communities and Local Government March 2010).

A desk-based assessment commissioned by JS Bloor (George 2005) identified that the proposed development area is located within the historic settlement core of Rearsby

and included a number of historic buildings, including two locally listed as buildings of special architectural or historic interest: a large, brick-built barn, dated 1715, and a stone-built former stable, also thought to be early 18th century in date. These form part of a complex of buildings arranged around a farmyard in the south of the proposed development area which are located within Rearsby village conservation area.



**Figure 1.** Site location

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An archaeological evaluation was commissioned by JS Bloors and carried out by ULAS in 2007 (Jones 2007). Twelve evaluation trenches were excavated within the proposed development area, but limited to areas accessible to a JCB. A number of archaeologically significant deposits were recorded within the trenches located towards the east of the proposed development area including four pits of Late/post medieval date, two ditches of possible medieval date, two linear features, one of which could be prehistoric in date, a medieval post-hole and evidence of medieval sand quarrying.

## 2. Aims and Methodology

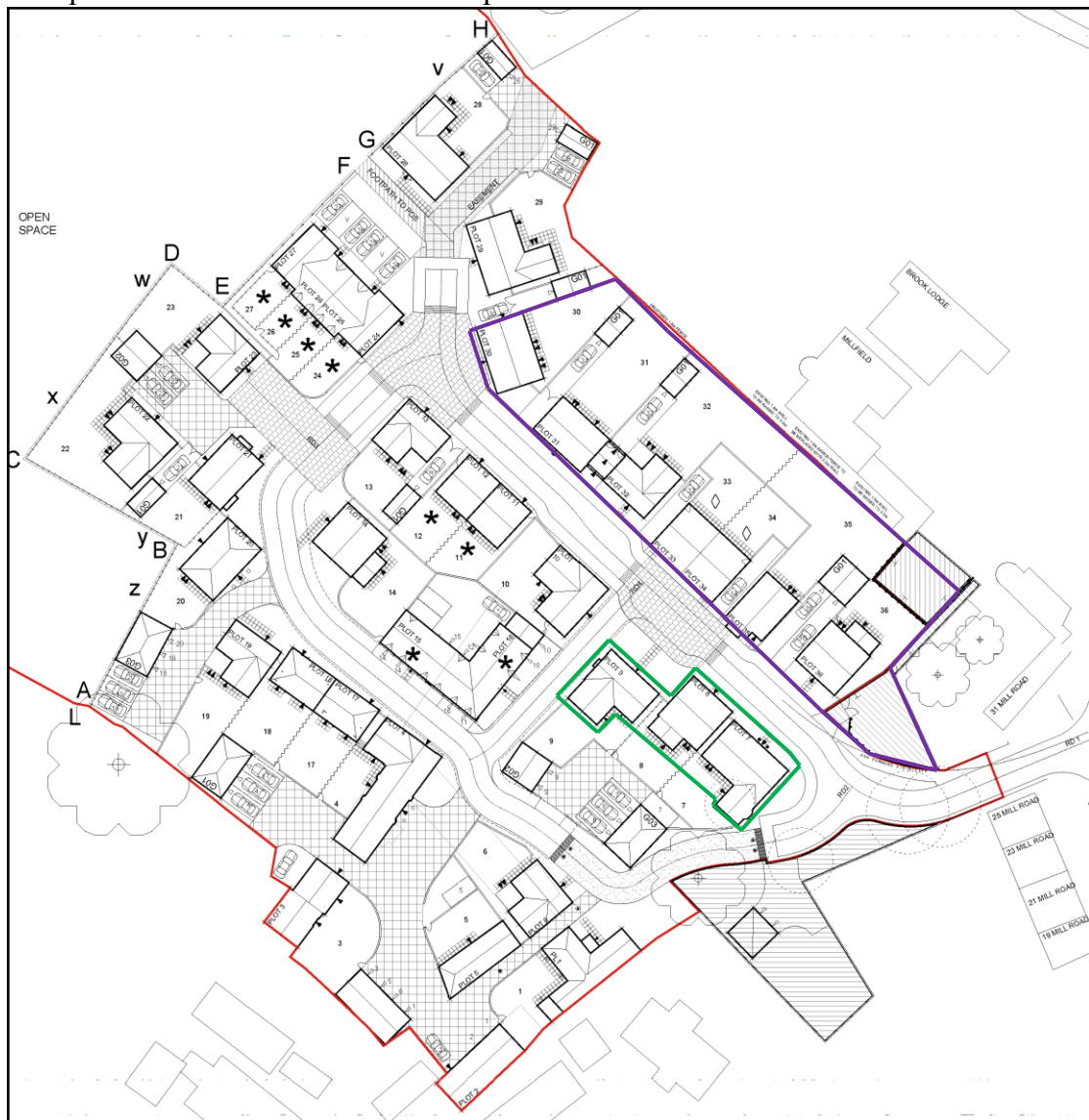
The aim of the archaeological work, through archaeological inspection and recording of groundworks by the client's contractors, was to:

- To identify the presence/absence of 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

The work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2006) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008), the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LMARS 1997) and adhered to the University's Health and Safety policy. The methodology to be followed was detailed in the *Design Specification for Archaeological work* (ULAS 11-609).

All groundworks were carried out by 8 tonne and 16 tonne machines with back actors fitted with a 850mm toothed bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. The exposed substratum was observed and the spoil searched for finds. The watching brief took place between March 7th and March 15th 2011. The topsoil strip was carried out by an 8 tonne machine with back actor fitted with a ditching bucket and took place between March 16th and April 7th 2011.



**Figure 2** Area of controlled strip (in purple) and area of archaeological watching brief (in green).  
(Not to Scale)

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1 Watching Brief (Plots 7, 8, & 9)**

The watching brief area had been stripped of topsoil prior to the initial site visit; the first plot to be monitored was plot 7 (*Figures 2 & 5*), the south-easternmost plot. The footing trenches were excavated under continuous archaeological supervision. The exterior wall footings measured 0.85m wide and the interior walls measured 0.65m wide, the eastern footings reached a depth of approximately 1m below the existing ground surface, as excavation progressed westwards (upslope) the depth increased to approximately 1.3m below the existing ground level.

The majority of the eastern trenches contained only dark grey brown sandy silt with no clear evidence of undisturbed substrata. It is likely that these deposits represent backfilled quarry pits. A number of animal bones were present, but no dating evidence recovered.

As excavation continued to the west undisturbed substrata began to appear and consisted of sands and gravels. In the westernmost corner of the footings a linear quarry pit, [001] aligned north-west to south-east was exposed from which a single sherd of 12th century Leicester Splashed ware pottery was recovered (*Figure 11*), suggesting medieval quarrying.

The excavation of the plot 8, to the north-west produced similar results as plot 7, the easternmost footings contained evidence of extensive ground disturbance, rather than obvious quarrying, while the western trenches contained only undisturbed substrata. Significantly the ground disturbance observed within plot 8 appeared to be more recent than that seen in plot 7 (*Figure 10*); it is possible that this area has suffered 20th century ground disturbance related to modern land use, rather than medieval or post medieval quarrying.

#### **3.2 Controlled Strip (Plots 31-36)**

The controlled topsoil strip began at the south-eastern end of the proposed development area, adjacent to plot 36 (*Figure 2*). Approximately 0.45m of topsoil was excavated revealing an horizon of light yellow, yellow brown silty-sand as the topsoil strip progressed towards the north-west.

Adjacent to the easternmost boundary of the proposed development area a circular, brick-built structure was exposed immediately below the turf. The structure was approximately 0.5m in diameter and constructed of 9inch x 3inch x 4 ½ inch red bricks, laid in dry courses, the interior of the structure was conical, expanding to approximately 0.9m. There was a ceramic pipe entering from the south-east and a second glazed pipe entering from the north-west. It is likely that the structure is a late 19th or early 20th century cesspit.

The topsoil depth undulated across the area of the controlled strip, and within the area of Plot 35 the depth decreased markedly to approximately 0.25m. The underlying subsoil also became darker. Hand cleaning failed to define any definitive archaeological features, however it was decided to hand excavate a section of this



darker material, (003) and a number of sherds of 12th-13th century Potters Marsden pottery were recovered (*Appendix 1*). Also recovered were two residual sherds of late Anglo Saxon pottery, a Torksey type ware. Given its lack of definitive edges, it is likely that (003) was a colluvial deposit or some sort of build up of material, possibly a midden. A north-east to south-west aligned furrow was also identified adjacent to this spread, from which two sherds of Midland Purple ware, c.1375-1550 in date were recovered (*Figure 5*).

The topsoil strip continued towards the north-west without revealing any further archaeological features. Towards the north-western edge of the strip, within Plot 31 (*Figures 2, 5 & 6*) an area of burnt clay was exposed, and further hand cleaning revealed a hearth base consisting of heated clay, large cobbles and puddled clay, as well as a number of smaller pits surrounding the kiln.

The hearth base consisted of a fired clay floor (005) approximately 2m in diameter, with the clay becoming less well fired away from the centre. There were a number of river cobbles on the south-western edge, possibly structural remains of the hearth base. Excavation revealed that only the base floor of the hearth remained and the base was only approximately 0.08m deep overlying undisturbed sand substrata. A number of *in-situ* pebbles were recorded on the south-western edge of the hearth base, likely to be structural (*Figure 4*). No dating evidence was recovered from this part of the hearth base. A recent animal burial was uncovered near the centre of (005) truncating any potential structural evidence relating to the centre of the hearth base.

Abutting the south-east of the kiln floor was a large spread of dark grey brown silty sand (006), which contained a large amount of charcoal. Excavation recovered a number of sherds of late Saxon Lincoln Shelly ware (late 9th-12th Century) pottery and fragments of kiln furniture from this deposit (*Appendix 1*). Although the interface between (005) and (006) was unclear it is likely that (006) is the earlier deposit. (006) was again only a shallow feature of approximately 0.12m. It is possible that (006) indicates the location of the rake hole and (006) is a build up of waste material during the firing of the hearth base.

To the north-east of the hearth base there was a deposit of heated clay (007); excavation indicated that this was a spread of material overlying undisturbed subsoil. Examination of the fired clay indicated it to be daub, a number of wattle/wood impressions could be identified within the daub. It is likely that (007) is the remains of the hearth structure. Unfortunately no dating evidence was recovered from (007), so, it is unclear, therefore whether it relates to the recorded kiln structure (005), however, it is likely to represent the abandonment and collapse of its superstructure.

Environmental samples recovered from (006) contained a large amount of charred remains, consisting mainly of cereal grains, the most common of which was barley. Similar concentrations recovered from other archaeological sites have been interpreted as evidence of malting, as part of the brewing process (*Appendix 2*).

Excavation of a number of the surrounding pits uncovered only recent animal burials. The topsoil strip continued towards the north-west. Modern ground disturbance increased significantly within this part of the proposed development area and no further archaeologically significant deposits were observed.



**Figure 3** Pre-Excavation shot of hearth base structure.



**Figure 4** Post-Excavation shot of hearth base structure.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The proposed development area occupied a promising location within the historic settlement core of Rearsby, which itself sits within a rich archaeological landscape. Significant archaeological remains were recorded during the course of the watching brief, most notably evidence of medieval occupation from the 9th to the 12th centuries including a hearth likely to be associated with malting and associated debris. Environmental evidence suggests the feature was used during brewing.

Evidence of extensive quarrying was also recorded; a sherd of 12th century pottery recovered from one of the quarries suggests a tentative medieval date for the quarrying. Further evidence of medieval occupation and activity in the form of pottery finds were recovered from a colluvial deposit and a possible furrow.

#### **5. Archive & Publication**

The site archive consists of:

- 3 A2 permagraph sheets containing section, plans & site notes
- 1 A3 permagraph sheet containing sketch plan & site notes
- 56 Black & White negatives and contact prints
- CD containing 60 digital images
- 2 A4 contact sheets
- 2 A4 photo index sheets
- 8 A4 watching brief sheets
- 1 A4 sample index sheet
- 1 A4 drawing sheet index
- 1 A4 drawing index
- 1 A4 context summary sheet
- 7 A4 context sheets
- 1 A3 paper plan showing proposed development area & exposed archaeology
- 1 A3 paper map showing proposed development area
- 1 box of finds
- Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report Number 2011-119)
- Unbound copy of pottery report
- Unbound copy of environmental report

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the Accession Number X.A38. 2011.

A version of the summary (above) will be published in *Transactions of Leicestershire Historical & Archaeological Society* in due course.

#### **6. References**

IfA, 2008 *Code of Conduct*

IfA, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

George, S. 2005 *An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment for a Proposed Residential Development at Rearsby Home Farm, Land off Mill Road, Rearsby, Leicestershire (SK 647 144)*. ULAS Report 2005-023.

Jones, G. 2007 *Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Mill Road, Rearsby, Leicestershire (SK 647 144)*. ULAS Report 2007-110.

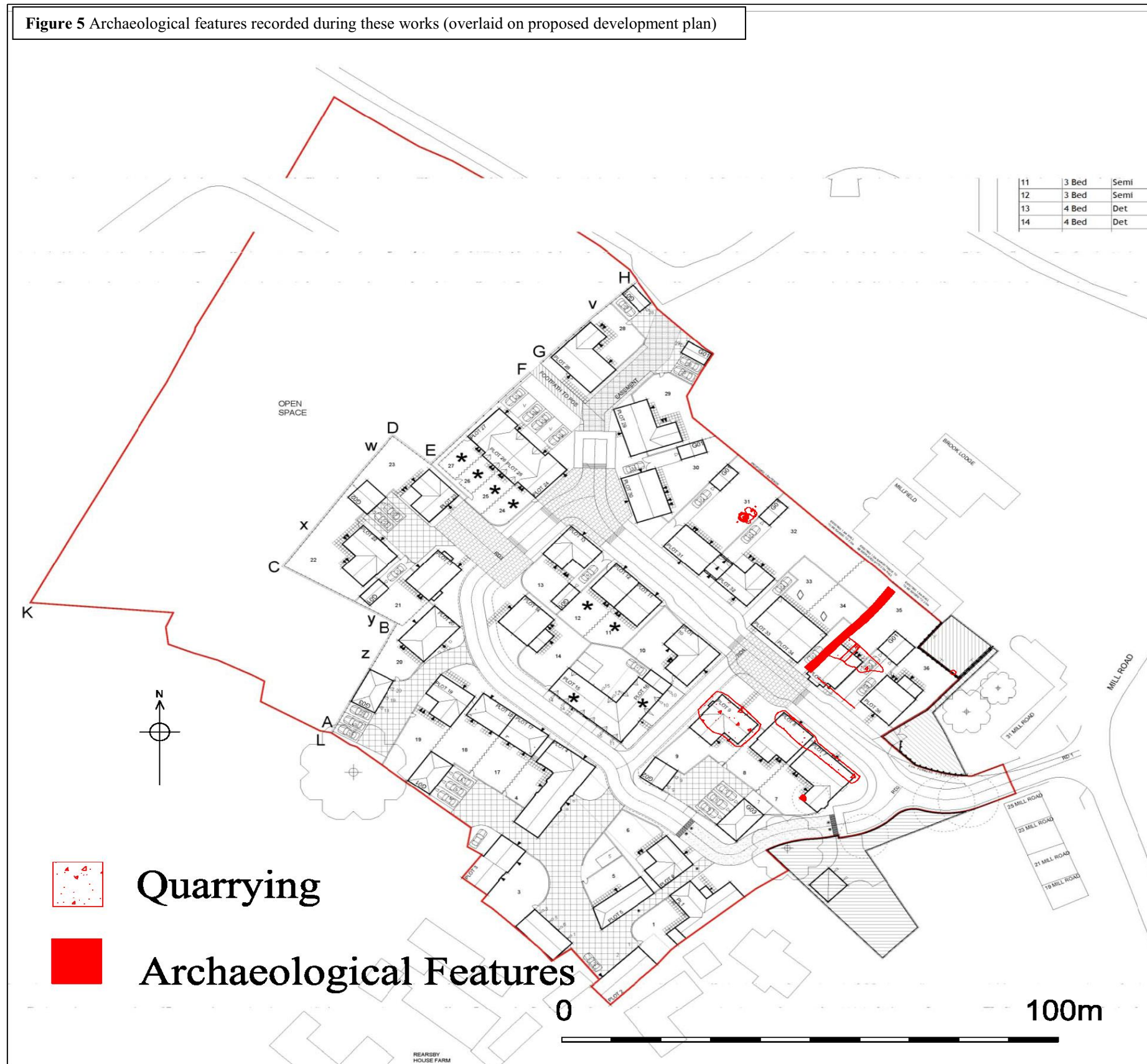
Stewart, I.J., & Watkins, M.J., 1982 *A 15th-Century Corn-Drying Kiln From Collfryn, Llansantffraid Deuddwr, Powys*. Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust.

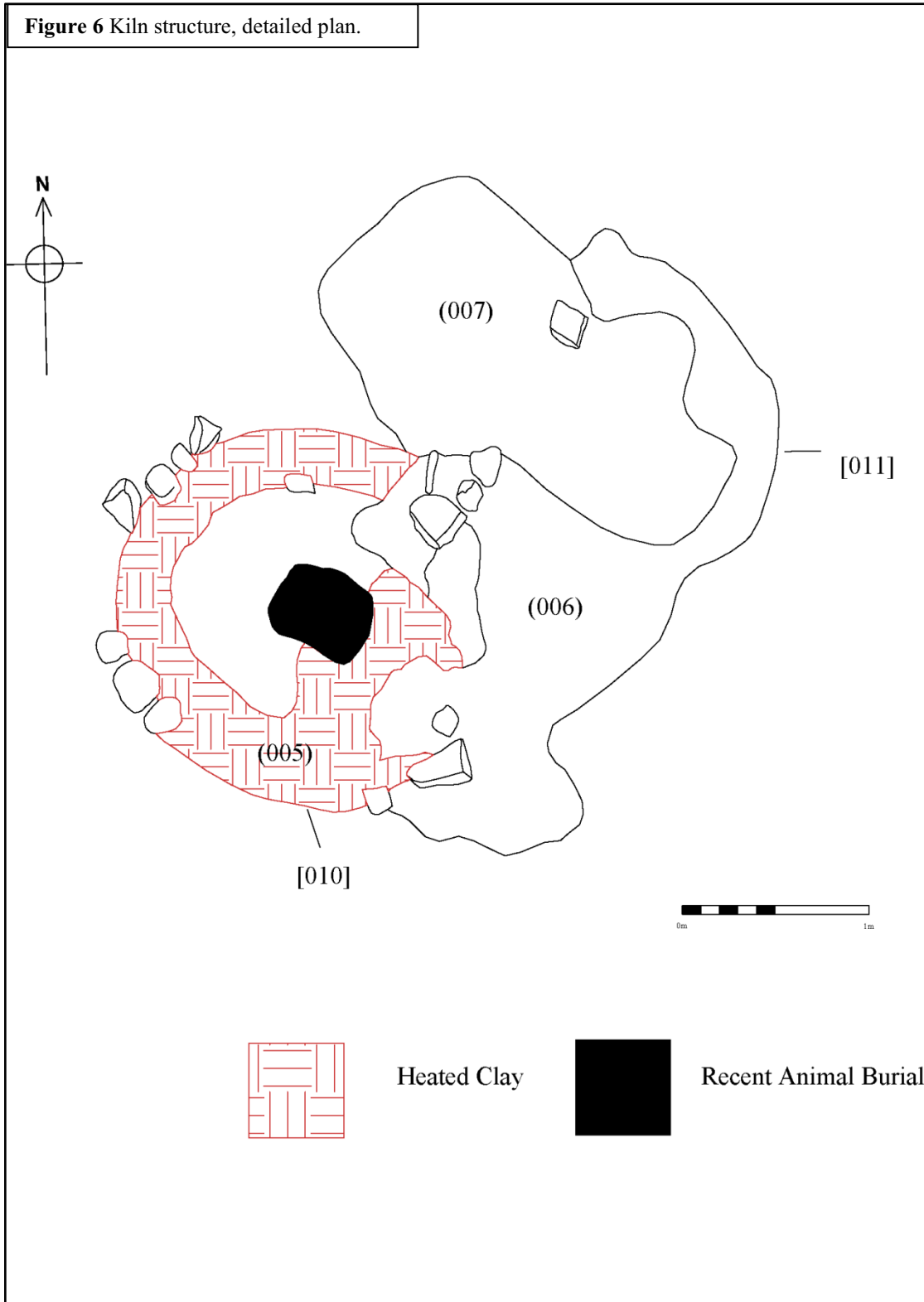
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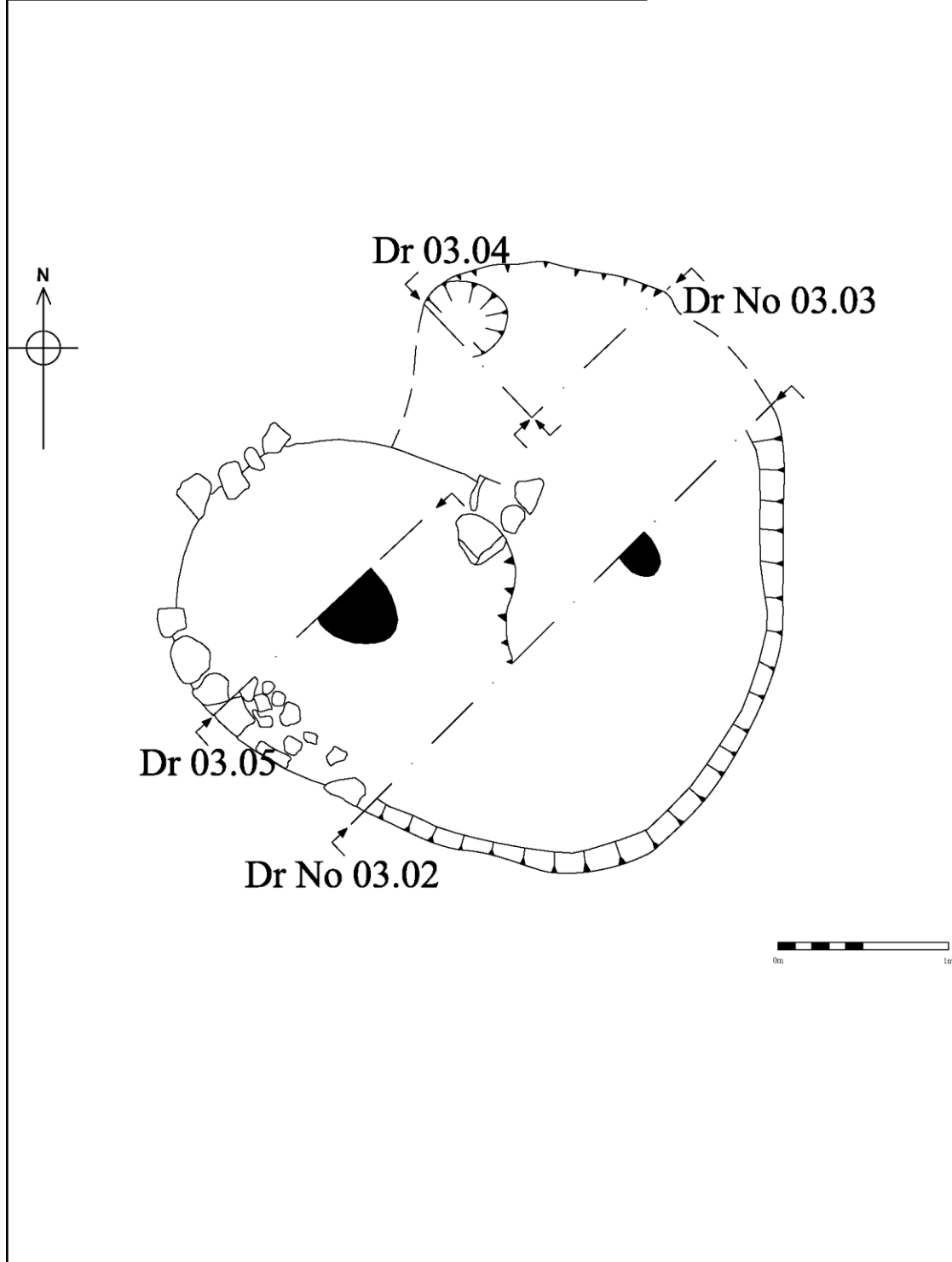
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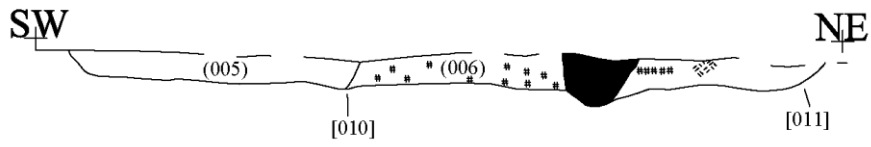
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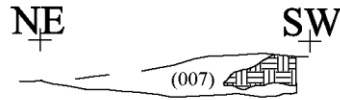


**Figure 7** Kiln structure, post excavation plan showing recorded sections.

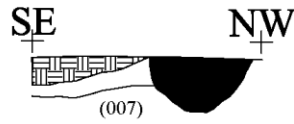




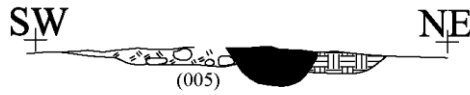
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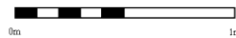
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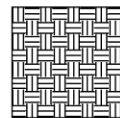
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Modern Intrusion



Burnt Clay/Daub

Figure 8 Recorded sections of kiln.





**Figure 9** South east facing section of kiln (post-excitation).



**Figure 10** Evidence of quarrying seen within footings trenches.



**Figure 11** Quarry pit [001] from which 12th century pottery was recovered.

## Appendix 1: The Post Roman Pottery.

*Deborah Sawday*

### The Finds

The finds were recorded by context, material, number and, where appropriate, weight in grams. The results are shown below (Table 2).

### The Pottery and Building Material

The pottery, 24 sherds, weighing 623 grams, was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research group, (MPRG, 2001) and the ULAS fabric series (Connor and Buckley 1999; Sawday 1989).

Table 1: The medieval and later pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams).

| Fabric                             | Common Name           | Sherds    | Weight     | Comments |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| <b>Early Anglo Saxon</b>           |                       |           |            |          |
| SX                                 | Saxon                 | 1         | 4          |          |
| <b>Late Anglo Saxon</b>            |                       |           |            |          |
| ST1-3                              | Stamford ware 1-3     | 4         | 53         |          |
| LI                                 | Lincoln Shelly ware   | 5         | 83         |          |
| TO                                 | Torksey type          | 2         | 9          |          |
| <b>Early High Medieval</b>         |                       |           |            |          |
| PM                                 | Potters Marston       | 3         | 45         |          |
| SP3                                | Splashed ware 3       | 1         | 47         |          |
| <b>High Medieval/Late Medieval</b> |                       |           |            |          |
| CC1                                | Chilvers Coton ware 1 | 3         | 181        |          |
| MP1, 2                             | Midland Purple        | 2         | 40         |          |
| <b>Post Medieval/Modern</b>        |                       |           |            |          |
| EA6                                | Blackware             | 1         | 140        |          |
| EA10                               | White Earthenware     | 1         | 4          |          |
| EA                                 | Earthenware           | 1         | 17         |          |
| <b>Total</b>                       |                       | <b>24</b> | <b>623</b> |          |

An interesting range of material was recovered, including late Saxon Stamford and Lincoln wares and a residual sherd of early Saxon pottery in context (6), together with a possibly intrusive fragment of post medieval Earthenware. Pottery dating generally from the mid or late 11th to the 12th or 13th century occurred in context (3), and a fragment of Splashed ware dating from *circa* 1100-1250 in context [1] (2). Two sherds of late medieval Midland Purple ware were the only finds in context (4).

Fragments of burnt daub with wattle or wood impressions in the clay body were found and are thought to relate to a hearth base in context (7). A post-medieval brick was also found in an unstratified context.

## The Miscellaneous Finds

Of note was an unstratified quern fragment which was possibly medieval in date. Examination of the stone suggests that this may be a Charnwood granite (N. Cooper, John Thomas, pers. comm.), possibly of a similar type to that used in the pre-historic period for saddle querns.

Two complete Victorian glass bottles occurred in unstratified contexts.

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Table 2: The pottery and miscellaneous finds by fabric/material, fragment numbers and weight (grams) by context.

| Context | Fabric/Material               | Nos | Grams | Comments   |
|---------|-------------------------------|-----|-------|--|
| POTTERY |                               |     |       |  |
| [1] 2   | SP3 – Leicester Splashed ware | 1   | 47    | Jar rim (Davies and Sawday fig.94.134), c.1100-1250.               |
| 3       | ST3 – Coarse Stamford ware    | 1   | 28    | Abraded, inturned bowl rouletted exterior rim, Kilmurry form 14-6, |

|     |                               |   |     |  |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|-----|--|
|     |                               |   |     | mid/late 11th C (Kilmurry 1980, 137).  |
| 3   | ST2 – Fine Stamford ware      | 1 | 4   | Yellow glaze   |
| 3   | ST1 – Very Fine Stamford ware | 1 | 10  | Traces of glaze externally, c.1100-1250.   |
| 3   | TO – Torksey type ware        | 2 | 9   | Abraded surfaces, sandy.   |
| 3   | PM – Potters Marston          | 1 | 13  | Sooted externally, generally 12th – 13th C.  |
| 4   | MP1 – Midland Purple ware 1   | 1 | 27  | Jug neck and shoulder, decorated with inscribed wavy lines and white slip under a glaze. Parallel is to decoration only (Mayes and Scott 1984, fig. 19.16), c.1375-1550.                                     |
| 4   | MP2 – Midland Purple ware 2   | 1 | 13  | c.1375-1550  |
| 6   | SX – Saxon ware               | 1 | 4   | Reduced black throughout, rock tempered, ?granitic, early Saxon, c.400/50-650.   |
| 6   | ST3 – Coarse Stamford ware    | 1 | 11  | Basal angle, burnt, late 9th C - 1050.   |
| 6   | LI – Lincoln Shelly ware      | 1 | 24  | Sooted/burnt jar with diamond rouletting on shoulder, simple everted rim not exactly paralleled at Lincoln (Young <i>et al</i> 2005). Fabric leached, ?LI2, Lincoln Late Saxon Shelly ware, late 9th-12th C. |
| 6   | LI – Lincoln Shelly ware      | 1 | 8   | Wheel thrown shoulder, probably a jar, leached fabric  |
| 6   | LI – Lincoln Shelly ware      | 2 | 33  | Body sherds, probably wheel thrown, leached fabric.  |
| 6   | EA - Earthenware              | 1 | 17  | Wheel thrown, basal angle with knife cut bevel exterior wall, ?flower pot, post medieval.  |
| 9   | EA10 – White Earthenware      | 1 | 4   | Green glaze and moulded decoration, modern –   |
| U/S | LI – Lincoln Shelly ware      | 1 | 18  | Hand made base.  |
| U/S | PM – Potters Marston          | 2 | 32  | Abraded, both sooted externally  |
| U/S | CC1 – Chilvers Coton 1        | 1 | 13  | Sooted externally,   |
| U/S | CC1 – Chilvers Coton 1        | 1 | 62  | Lower wall of jug base   |
| U/S | CC1 – Chilvers Coton 1        | 1 | 106 | Jug rim & strap handle   |

|                   |                  |   |     |  |
|-------------------|------------------|---|-----|--|
|                   |                  |   |     | stub, the latter diagonally slashed on upper surface, c.1240/50+                       |
| U/S               | EA6 - Blackware  | 1 | 140 | Base, brown glazed externally, stacking evidence underneath, c.1650-1750.              |
| BUILDING MATERIAL |                  |   |     |  |
| 7                 | Clay             | 7 | 592 | Burnt daub with wattle/wood impressions  |
| U/S               | EA - Earthenware | 1 | 149 | Brick, post medieval   |
| BONE              |                  |   |     |  |
| 6                 | Animal           | 5 |     | Unident.   |
| WORKED STONE      |                  |   |     |  |
| U/S               | Quern            | 1 |     | Fragment, possibly Charnwood granite, ?medieval.                                       |
| VICTORIAN GLASS   |                  |   |     |  |
| U/S               | Bottle Glass     | 1 |     | Complete, moulded and embossed 'Symington & Cos Edinburgh, Ess(ence) Coffee & Chicory' |
| U/S               | Bottle Glass     | 1 |     | Complete, moulded, sheared (cut) lip   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Site/ Parish: Rearsby House far, Rearsby, Leics.<br>Accession No.: XA38 2011<br>Document Ref: rearsby3.docx<br>Material: pottery & misc. finds<br>Site Type: village core | Submitter: G. Richards<br>Identifier: D. Sawday<br>Date of Identification: 9.5.11<br>Method of Recovery: watching brief<br>Job Number: (11-609) defaulted |
|---|---|

## Appendix 2

### The Charred plant remains

*Anita Radini*

#### *Introduction*

During a watching brief at Rearsby House Farm, carried out by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services, the remains of a feature consisting of the base of a hearth was unearthed. A bulk sample of soil was taken of burnt material near the feature to clarify its possible uses of the kiln. Finds associated to the hearth base dated to the medieval period. The results of the archaeobotanical analysis are given below.

#### *Materials and Methods*

A sample, 1 (006), was taken for processed by wet-sieving with flotation to recover charred and mineralised plant remains as well as other remains such as small bones and fish remains. The bulk sample was of medieval date, it consisted of three parts for a total of 18 litres of soil, and it was processed in a sieving tank with 0.5mm mesh and flotation into a 0.3mm mesh sieve. Residues were all air dried and separated on a 4mm mesh riddle and the coarse fraction (CF) over 4mm sorted for all remains and finds, the fine fractions (FF) below 4mm were reserved for sorting during the analysis stage if required, but the high number of items in the flots did not make this necessary. The flotation fractions (Flots) were transferred from the sieve into plastic boxes and air dried. The flots were scanned in their entirety noting the species present and their number. The results from flots were added together for this analysis and presented for the sample as a whole. Morphological criteria were used for the identification of plant species, based on modern reference material and seed identification manuals (e.g. Berggren 1981; Anderberg 1994; Cappers *et al.* 2006). Plant names follow Stace (1997).

#### *Results and Discussion*

The sample had a very high amount of charred remains (143 items were counted in total), consisting mainly of cereal grains. The most common remains belonged to barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) 101 charred grains were in fact counted. The second most common cereal was wheat (*Triticum* cf. *aestivum*), 35 charred grains, but the absence of chaff does not allowed to confirm the species. Five charred grains of large seeds of grasses (Poacea) and two unidentified charred seeds were also found, which were probably weeds of the crop of barley and/or wheat.

A percentage of 60% of the grains showed evidence of 'sprouting' embryos while the remaining grains had 'sunken' features where the sprouted embryos had detached, from grains (during the charring process), these results were very similar to those found in Freeschool Lane, Leicester (Radini,2009) and were interpreted as evidence of malting.

### *Conclusion*

While the hearth base has lost its upper part, the results are consistent with the rake out of material associated with malting. .

### **Bibliography**

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**APPENDIX 3 OASIS**

| <b>INFORMATION REQUIRED</b>      | <b>EXAMPLE</b>                     |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Project Name                     | Rearsby House Farm                 |
| Project Type                     | Watching Brief                     |
| Project Manager                  | Patrick Clay                       |
| Project Supervisor               | Gerwyn Richards                    |
| Previous/Future work             | Previous: Evaluation. Future: None |
| Current Land Use                 | Derelict Farmyard                  |
| Development Type                 | Residential                        |
| Reason for Investigation         | PPS5                               |
| Position in the Planning Process | As a condition                     |
| Site Co ordinates                | SK 647 144                         |
| Start/end dates of field work    | March 2011                         |
| Archive Recipient                | LMARS                              |
| Height min/max                   | 56mOD                              |
| Study Area                       | N/A                                |
| Finds                            | Yes                                |
|                                  |                                    |
|                                  |                                    |

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