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Leicester**

**Archaeological Services**

**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
Medbourne Grange, Drayton Road,  
Nevill Holt, Leicestershire  
NGR: SP 81620 94540 centre**

James Harvey



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Medbourne Grange, Drayton Road  
Nevill Holt, Leicestershire**

**NGR: SP 81620 94540 centre**

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## **An Archaeological Evaluation at Medbourne Grange, Drayton Road, Nevill Holt, Leicestershire (SP 81620 94540, centre)**

James Harvey

### **Summary**

*University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land at Medbourne Grange, Drayton Road, Nevill Holt, Leicestershire (SP 81620 94540). The fieldwork was a post-determination requirement on a planning application in advance of the proposed construction of an anaerobic digestion plant.*

*A total of eleven trenches were excavated across the proposed development site that revealed no evidence of archaeological activity.*

*The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council in due course with accession number X.A40.2013.*

### **1. Introduction**

Planning permission has been granted for the construction of an anaerobic digestion plant comprising a digester tank, digestate storage tank, equipment building, maize clamp, farm yard manure clamp, underground collection tank, associates building, access, driveway & landscaping (PA 10/00818/FUL). The proposed development is located on Drayton Road on rising land just to the north of the village of Nevill Holt (SP 81620 94540; Figs 1-2).

The Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) suggests that the site lies within an area of archaeological interest. Therefore, the Senior Planning Archaeologist of Leicestershire County Council (LCC), as archaeological advisor to Harborough District Council, required an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching as detailed in their brief (LCC, 08.02.2013). University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned to undertake the work on behalf of the client.

The work was required in order to assess the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits which might be present in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the future development proposals.

This document presents the results of a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation that was undertaken between the 8th and 10th April 2013, in advance of the proposed development. It addresses the requirements of a planning condition from the planning authority.

A strategy for the work was set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation, (Score 2013, hereinafter WSI). The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (NPPF; Department of Communities and Local Government 22.03.2012).

## 2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

The site is located within the field immediately north-east of Medbourne Grange Farm (SP 81620 94540; Figs. 1 and 2). This lies approximately 1km north of Nevill Holt and 25km south-east of Leicester City Centre, within Harborough district of Leicestershire. The proposed development area covers approximately 1 ha.

The general topography consists of gently undulating farmland that slopes gradually down to the west from a height of *c.* 141m aOD at its eastern extent against Drayton Road to *c.*133m aOD at its western extent.

The solid geology of the study site area is recorded by the British Geological Survey (1:50,000 scale) as Whitby Mudstone overlain by Oadby Member diamicton superficial deposits. ([mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html](http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html)).

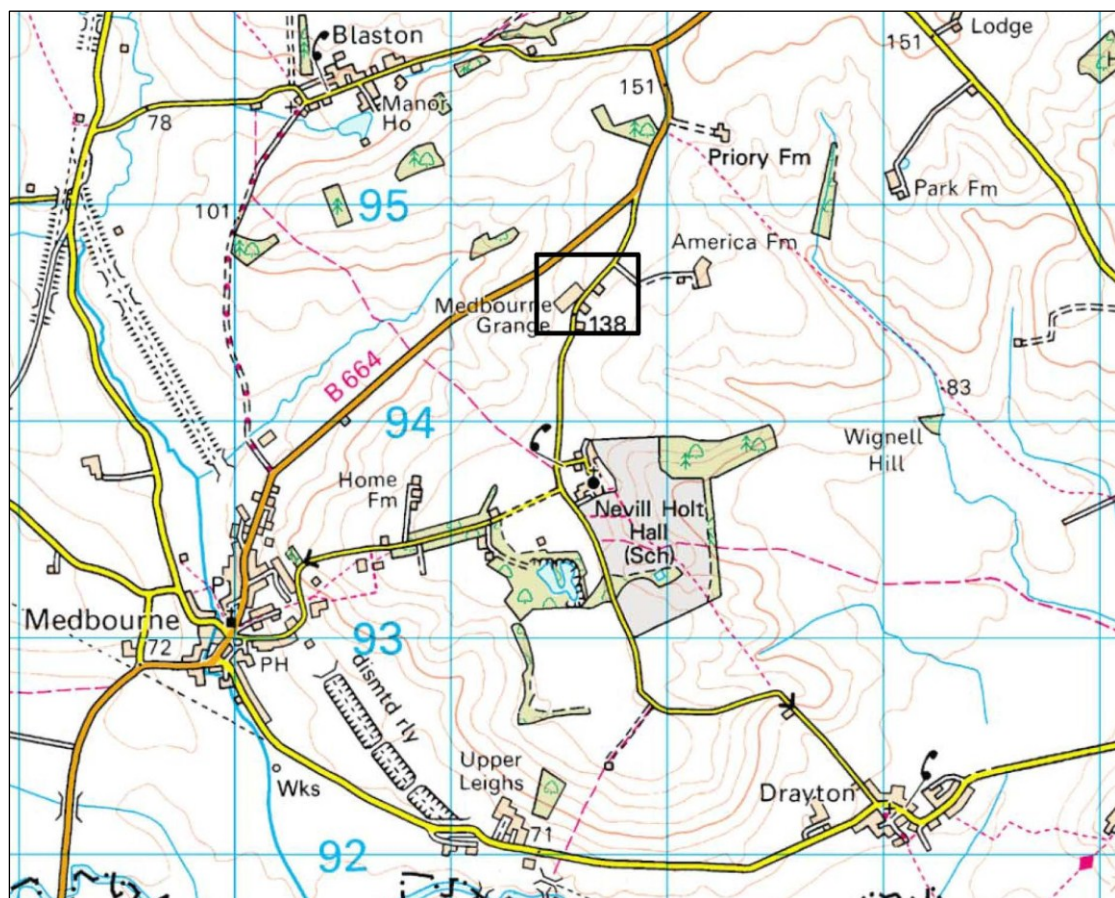


Figure 1 Site Location Plan highlighting the proposed development area. Scale 1:50000

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Figure 2 Site Location Plan (supplied by the client).

### 3. Archaeological Background (from the Brief)

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the site lies within a landscape known to be rich in archaeological remains. In particular, a Roman site and possible metal working site are recorded on the opposite side of the road (HER Ref: **MLE 2189/2190**).

The proposed development site does not appear to have been developed previously and as such any archaeological remains may survive relatively undisturbed. Consequently, there is a likelihood that any buried archaeological remains present will be affected by the development.

### 4. Aims and Objectives

The main aims 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 development
- 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 in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

#### *Research Aims*

There was potential for the site to contribute to national and regional research aims including settlement, industry and trade in the Roman period.

## 5. Methodology

Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET), as archaeological advisors to the planning authority requested that approximately 500m<sup>2</sup> (5%) of the proposed development area was evaluated.

The agreed WSI proposed ten 30m x 1.8m trenches, located in order to provide a blanket sample across the proposed development area (Score 2013, Fig.3).

The topsoil and overlying layers were removed under full archaeological supervision until either the top of archaeology or natural undisturbed ground was reached, or to a maximum safe depth given the specific site conditions.

The bases of the trenches were cleaned in areas where potential archaeology was observed. Any archaeological remains were recorded and sample excavated in order to determine the character and date of any remains. Archaeological contexts as a cut are indicated by square brackets e.g. [09], while those that are fills are indicated by round brackets e.g. (07).

The trenches were located using a Topcon Hiper Pro GPS+ RTK System attached to a Topcon FC-100 controller. The data was processed using Topcon Tools GPS+ Post Processing Software and the final plans completed with the aid of TurboCad v.15 design software.

All the work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct (2010) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (2008)*.

## 6. Results

The excavated trenches closely matched the trenches set out in the WSI (Fig. 3). However the southernmost trench (Trench 11) was moved to the eastern side of the existing barn as its original position had previously been excavated and built up again with hard core. As the machine bucket used to excavate the trenches was only 1.5m wide an additional trench was excavated within the eastern part of the site (Trench 8) in order to meet the area requirements set out within the brief.

The overlying deposits were consistent across the whole site. The topsoil was composed of a dark grey-brown clayey-loam with occasional chalk and pebbles. Subsoil was present within all the trenches and comprised a dark yellowish-brown slightly silty-clay. The natural substratum was identified in all trenches and consisted of a mixed dark yellowish-brown / dark greyish-brown clay containing frequent chalk fragments and occasional limestone and flint fragments and occasional large pebbles/cobbles.

The trenches are summarised in Table 1.

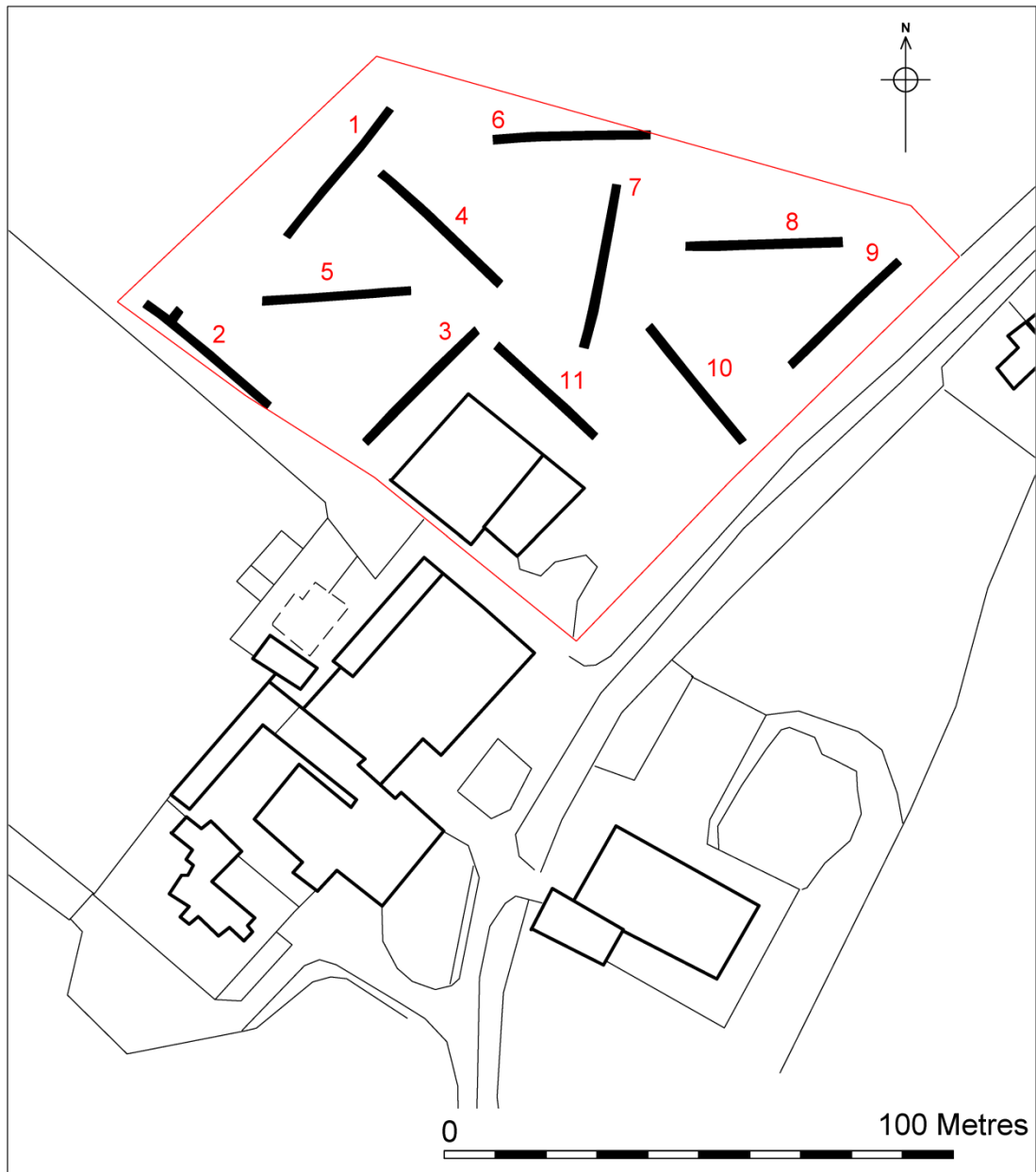


Figure 3 Trench Location Plan. Scale 1:1200



Table 1 Trench Summaries

TRENCH	ORIENTATION	LENGTH (m)	DEPTH (m aOD)	TOPSOIL THICKNESS (m)	SUBSOIL THICKNESS (m)	DESCRIPTION	TRENCH DEPTH (m)	MINIMUM DEPTH TO ARCHAEOLOGY (m aOD)
1	NE-SW	32	135.37-136.64	0.22-0.27	0.10-0.20	Two field drains. Negative	0.36-0.44	N/A
2	NW-SE	31	133.16-135.03	0.25-0.31	0.08-0.26	Two field drains. Negative	0.35-0.54	N/A
3	NE-SW	30.5	136.38-137.57	0.10-0.30	0.12-0.29	Three field drains. Negative	0.22-0.51	N/A
4	NW-SE	32	136.44-137.57	0.24-0.28	0.16-0.21	One field drain. Negative	0.34-0.51	N/A
5	E-W	29	134.95-136.81	0.20-0.28	0.17-0.21	Two field drains. Negative	0.41-0.49	N/A
6	E-W	31	137.72-138.97	0.24-0.30	0.10-0.27	One field drain. Negative	0.39-0.55	N/A
7	NNE-SSW	32	138.40-138.82	0.24-0.29	0.14-0.22	Five field drains. Negative	0.43-0.51	N/A
8	E-W	30	139.30-140.22	0.24-0.30	0.18-0.28	Two field drains. Negative	0.43-0.62	N/A
9	NE-SW	29.5	139.75-140.41	0.23-0.31	0.17-0.24	Three field drains. Negative	0.41-0.50	N/A
10	NW-SE	29.5	139.04-139.43	0.23-0.32	0.13-0.26	Two field drains. Negative	0.43-0.54	N/A
11	NW-SE	26.5	137.63-138.47	0.23-0.57	0.17-0.28	Modern disturbance. Negative	0.52-0.85	N/A

### ***Trench 1 (Plate 1)***

Trench 1 was located on the north-west edge of the site and was orientated north-east to south-west. Two modern field drains were recorded that cut the natural substratum. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

### ***Trench 2 (Plate 2)***

Trench 2 was located along the south-western edge of the site, c.25m south-west of Trench 1. The trench was orientated north-west to south-east and a small extension was also excavated at the north-west end. Two modern field drains were recorded that cut the natural substratum. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

### ***Trench 3 (Plate 3)***

Trench 3 was parallel to the north-west existing barn on a north-east to south-west alignment. Two modern field drains and a larger ceramic storm drain were recorded that cut the natural substratum. The topsoil was very thin at the south-west end of the

trench, relating to ground reduction in this area. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

***Trench 4 (Plate 4)***

Trench 4 was located *c.*5m south-east of Trench 1 on a perpendicular north-west to south-east alignment. A small area of disturbance in the natural substratum was recorded *c.*3m from the north-west end of the trench that probably relates to a natural tree bowl feature. One modern field drain was also recorded that cut the natural substratum. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

***Trench 5 (Plate 5)***

Trench 5 was located between Trenches 1 and 3 and was orientated east to west. Two modern field drains were recorded that cut the natural substratum. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

***Trench 6 (Plate 6)***

Trench 6 was located close to the north-eastern edge of the site, *c.*20m east of Trench 1. One modern field drain was recorded that cut the natural substratum. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

***Trench 7 (Plate 7)***

Trench 7 was located *c.*8m south of Trench 6 on a north north-east to south south-west orientation. Five modern field drains were recorded that cut the natural substratum. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

***Trench 8 (Plate 8)***

Trench 8 was located close to the north-eastern edge of the site, *c.*14m east of Trench 7 on an east to west orientation. Two modern field drains were recorded that cut the natural substratum. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

***Trench 9 (Plate 9)***

Trench 9 was located close to the south-east edge of the site, *c.*9m south-east of Trench 8 on a north-east to south-west orientation. Three modern field drains were recorded that cut the natural substratum. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

***Trench 10 (Plate 10)***

Trench 10 was located *c.*13m south-west of Trench 9 on a perpendicular north-west to south-east orientation. Two modern field drains were recorded that cut the natural substratum. No archaeological features or finds were recorded within this trench.

***Trench 11(Plate 11)***

Trench 11 was located parallel to the north-east side of the existing barn on a north-west to south-east orientation. The topsoil within this trench was noticeably thicker and mixed with a large quantity of modern building rubble. Part of a modern pit was recorded *c.*7m from the north-west end of the trench. The feature could be seen as a rectangular earthwork extending towards the barn.

## **7. Conclusion**

The archaeological evaluation revealed no evidence for archaeological features or finds apart from modern land drains cutting the natural substratum that were located within ten of the trenches. The drains appear to have been dug in two phases with shallow horseshoe drains truncated by much deeper drains that had been laid more recently by the current farmer. Modern disturbance was recorded within Trench 11 that probably relating the construction of the adjacent barn. A modern pit was also partially exposed within this trench that had been recently excavated to bury livestock (R. Beaty pers. comm.).

The topsoil and subsoil were very clean of finds with no pre-modern material recorded, perhaps suggesting that the land was under pasture during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

## **8. Archive**

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicester Museums in due course with accession number X.A40.2013. The archive consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2013-038)
- 11 Trench recording sheets
- 1 Contact sheets of digital photographs
- 1 Drawing index
- 1 photographic record (1 sheet)
- 1 CD of digital photographs
- 1 Set B&W contact sheets
- 1 Set B&W negatives

## **9. Publication**

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal *Transactions of The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. The report will also be added to the Archaeology Data Service's (ADS) Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York under the reference universi1- 148469.

INFORMATION REQUIRED	EXAMPLE
Project Name	Medbourne Grange, Nevill Holt
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	Vicki Score
Project Supervisor	James Harvey
Previous/Future work	No/Not Known
Current Land Use	Arable land
Development Type	an anaerobic digestion plant
Reason for Investigation	NPPF, Section 12
Position in the Planning Process	Post-Determination
Site Co ordinates	SP 81620 94540
Start/end dates of field work	08/04/2013-10/04/13
Archive Recipient	LCCHNET
Study Area *	1 hectare
Associated project reference codes    Museum accession	Accession Number XA40.2013 OASIS form ID: universi1-148469

## 10. Bibliography

IfA 2008, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation, Excavations, and Watching Briefs*.

IfA 2010, *Code of Conduct*.

LCC 2013, *Brief For Archaeological Investigation. Medbourne Grange, Drayton Road, Nevill Holt*. Dated 08.02.2013

NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*.

Score, V., 2013 *Written scheme of investigation for archaeological work: Medbourne Grange, Drayton Road, Nevill Holt*. ULAS Design Specification No. 13-361

## 11. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by James Harvey and Roy Poulter. Patrick Clay managed the project. Teresa Hawtin (Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council) monitored the work on behalf of the planning authority. I would like to thank the Beaty family for providing the machinery and for their help and cooperation throughout the duration of the fieldwork. Also a special thanks to Peter Hartmann who metal detected the trench spoil and surrounding areas.

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## Appendix 1 Trench Record Photographs



Plate 1: Trench 1 looking south-west



Plate 2: Trench 2 looking south-east



Plate 3 Trench 3 looking north-east



Plate 4: Trench 4 looking north-west





Plate 5: Trench 5 looking west



Plate 6: Trench 6 looking east



Plate 7: Trench 7 looking south south-west



Plate 8: Trench 8 looking east



Plate 9: Trench 9 looking south-west



Plate 10: Trench 10 looking north-east



Plate 11: Trench 11 looking north-west

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