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**An Archaeological Strip, Map and
Sample Excavation and Watching Brief
for a new poolhouse at The Old Rectory,
Mowsley, Leicestershire
(SP 6456 8897)**

Jennifer Browning



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For a New Poolhouse at
The Old Rectory, Mowsley,
Leicestershire
(SP 6456 8897)**

Jennifer Browning

for

Mr. & Mrs. P. Latham

Checked by Project Manager

Signed:



Date: 09.08.2013

Name: Patrick Clay

University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH

Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation and Watching Brief for a new poolhouse at The Old Rectory, Mowsley, Leicestershire (NGR SP 6456 8897) DRAFT REPORT

Jennifer Browning

Summary

An archaeological strip, map and sample excavation and watching brief was carried out south west of The Old Rectory, Mowsley, Leicestershire (NGR SP 6456 8897) in May and June 2013 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services prior to groundworks for a new poolhouse (PA:12/01766/FUL). The work produced evidence for a ditch, a post-hole and two gullies. Unfortunately, no dating evidence was recovered, however two of the features produced animal bones. The features are evidently associated with earlier use of the land, possibly relating to activity that took place prior to the construction of the Old Rectory in the late 18th century, which was reputedly previously occupied by a farm. The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A98 2013.

Introduction

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), DCLG implemented in 2012, this document forms the report for an archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation and watching brief at The Old Rectory, Mowsley, Leicestershire. Planning permission has been granted by Harborough District Council for the construction of a new poolhouse within the grounds of the Old Rectory (12/01766/FUL). The Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council requested the implementation of a scheme of archaeological investigation prior to and during the works, as the site lies in an area of archaeological interest and buried deposits may be affected by the work. This comprised an archaeologically supervised soil strip of the development area, together with archaeological excavation and recording as necessary. The work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Browning 2013).

Location and Geology

Mowsley lies in the Harborough District of Leicestershire, c. 12 miles (19km) south of Leicester (Figure 1). The site is located on the northern side of the village, immediately to the south-west of The Old Rectory (Figure 2) at an approximate height of 154m O.D and covers an area of 119 square metres. The Bedrock Geology consists of Dyrham Formation Siltstone and Mudstone Interbedded (British Geological Survey).

The new poolhouse was located to the rear of the Old Rectory, on land which sloped down from east down to west. Prior to the commencement of work the area was largely under grass, with a flowerbed close to the top of the slope. The area was enclosed on the east and west by wooden post and plank fencing, with gated access at both ends. There are mature trees to the south and smaller trees and shrubs delineating the area from the main lawns to the north behind the property.



Figure 1: Site Location (ringed)

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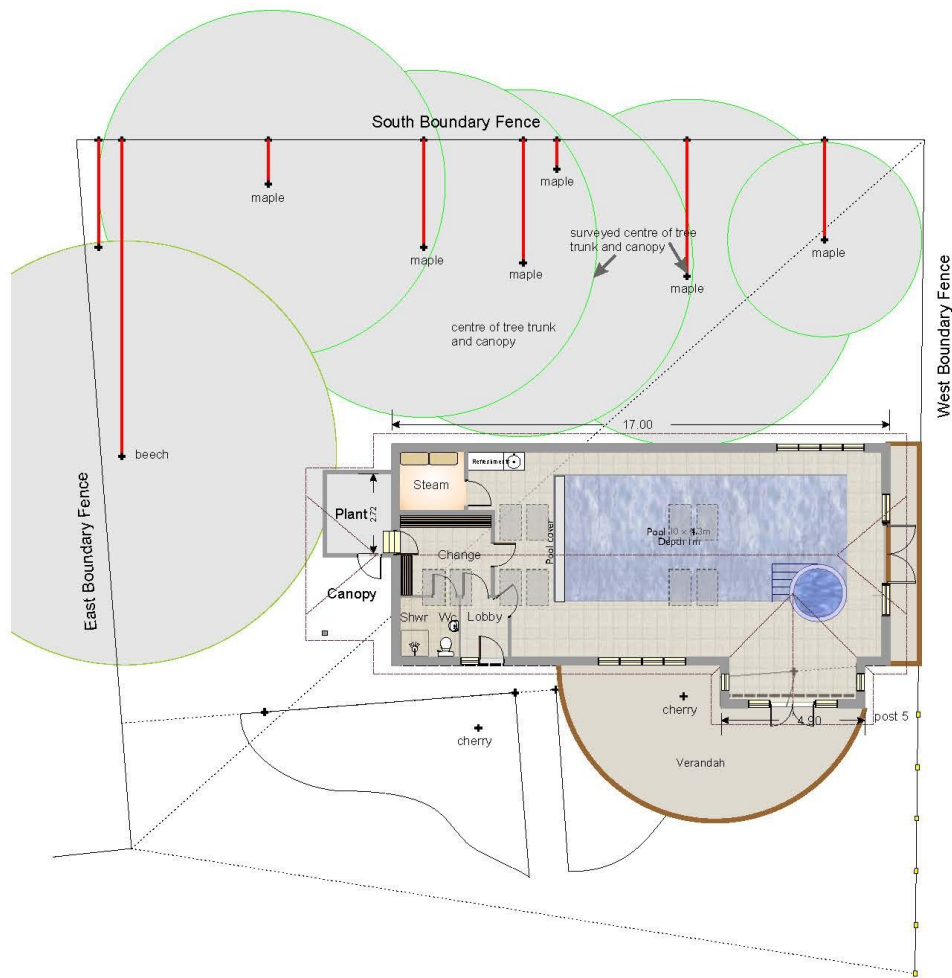
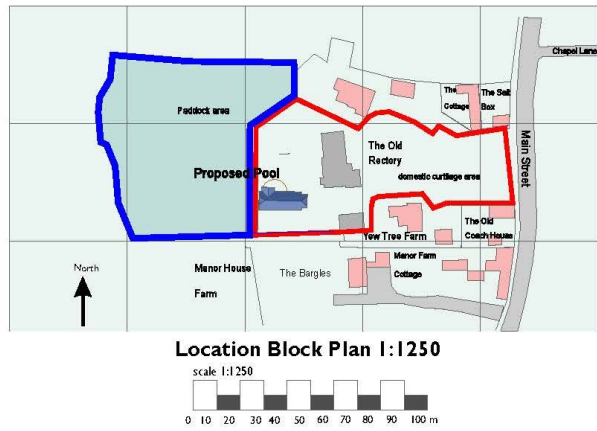


Figure 2: Plan of development (supplied by client). Note that north is to the bottom of the lower picture.

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 undat., 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 not recovered. 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 work was carried out in 2011 for a new pond located west of the Old Rectory (ULAS Report 2011-192). No archaeological deposits were identified during 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.

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 groundworks
- : 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 the excavation of four trial trenches on the 14th May, followed by topsoil stripping for the poolhouse on the 10th June 2013. A mini-digger and a larger excavator were utilised during the course of the work, both with ditching bucket.

The cuts of the features are shown in square brackets, e.g. [8] while the fills are in round brackets e.g. (7).

Results

The site was attended on the 14th May and the 10th June 2013, when the programme of work commenced with exploratory excavation of trial trenches, following the methodology detailed in the WSI. Four trenches were excavated within the footprint of the new building; three aligned east-west and one north-south. Two gullies, a ditch and two putative post-holes were identified, however unfortunately no dating evidence was recovered. The features are described below. A second visit was made on the 10th June to watch the topsoil stripping, prior to ground reduction for the poolhouse. Further sections of the linear features were traced but no additional features were identified at this stage.

The topsoil varied in depth between 0.3m and 0.4m and consisted of dark reddish brown slightly sandy loam with frequent root disturbance and moderate pebbles and

stones. This overlay the subsoil, which consisted of a friable mixed reddish brown sandy clay matrix, with frequent stones and ironstone fragments. The natural subsoil was very similar to this deposit, but slightly lighter in colour and with more frequent stones. The archaeological features identified during the work are described below. Their shape and location can be seen on Figure 4 and their profiles on Figure 5.

Gully (5)[6]

Towards the top of the slope on the northern side, a shallow north-south gully was identified. The fill was dark brown silty clay, with a plastic consistency and occasional pebbles (context 6). Excavation revealed it to be 0.5m wide and 0.2m deep, with steeply sloping sides and a gently rounded base. Animal bones were recovered from the fill (see Appendix).

Post hole (3) [4]

Approximately 4m to the west of the gully, there was a sub-circular feature measuring 0.25m x 0.30m and 0.2m deep. It had steep sides and a pointed base and was filled with mid greyish brown silty clay (contexts 3 and 4).

Ditch (1) [2]

A more substantial ditch was encountered running the width of the site on a north-south alignment (cut 2). Exploratory sections were excavated in three locations and it was noted that it became narrower and shallower towards the south of the area. At the north of the area it was 0.45m deep but only 0.2m at the southern end. In the centre it was 1.1m wide and 0.4m deep. The sides sloped at a *c.*45 degree angle down to a rounded base. The ditch was filled with mid grey brown sandy silt, with frequent stones and pebbles (context 1). Animal bones were recovered from each excavated section (see Appendix).

Gully (7) [8]

At the west end of the area, a shallow, narrow gully orientated northwest-southeast was visible, cutting into the subsoil. It was 0.35m wide and 0.12m deep and had a flattish base (cut 8). The fill was mid grey brown silty clay, with occasional pebbles and stones (context 7). The size and profile of the feature, as well as its orientation on the sloping topography, indicate that it is likely to be a drainage feature.

On the south side of the stripped area, a very shallow (0.09m deep) sub-circular feature was seen. Investigation suggested that this was probably a garden feature or root intrusion rather than of archaeological origin.



Figure 3: Location of the poolhouse (hatched)

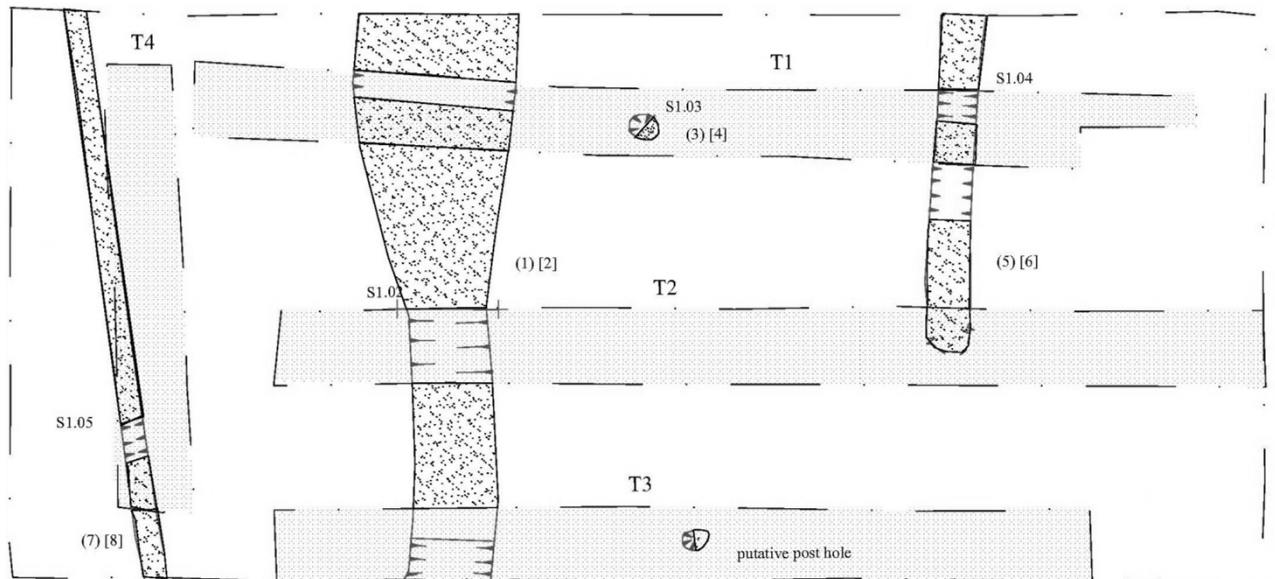
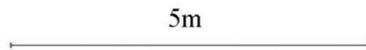


Figure 4: Plan of the trenches (shaded) and stripped areas, showing the location of all features identified

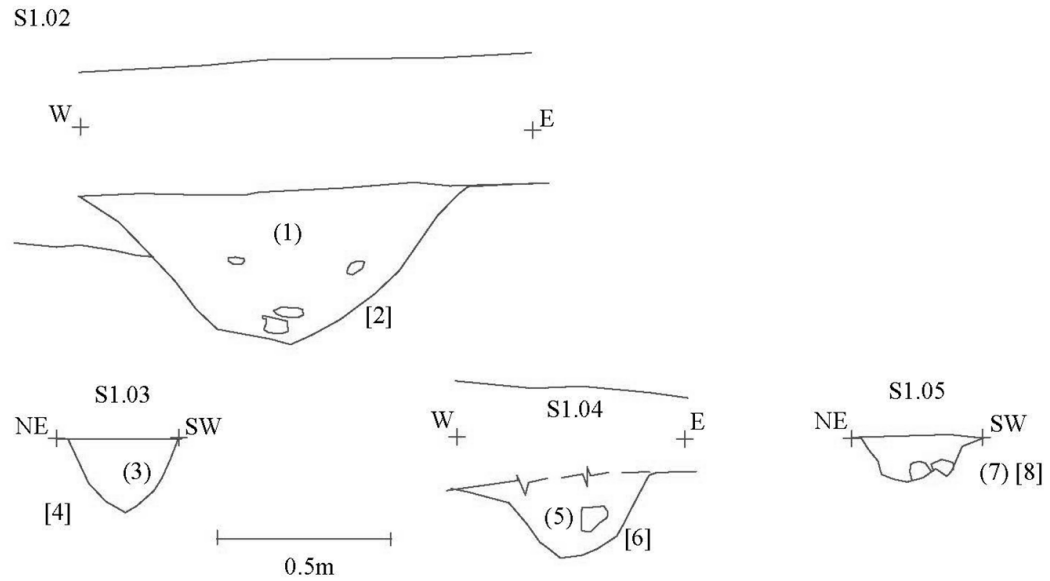


Figure 5: Sections through the features

Conclusions

A ditch, two gullies and a post hole were identified during the strip, plan and sample excavation at the Old Rectory, Mowsley. Animal bones, representing mixed waste from butchery and consumption, was recovered from ditch [2] and gully [6]. Unfortunately no good dating evidence was recovered but the features may be indicative of activity pre-dating the current building. While the purpose of the features is still open to interpretation, the larger ditch [2] could have been a boundary feature, later backfilled with domestic waste. Gully [8] was probably intended to provide drainage. The alignment and location of the current features indicate that they are not a continuation of a ditch and gully observed on the north side of the Old Rectory during the watching brief of 2005/6, which appeared to run east rather than west of the building.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Paul Latham and the contractors from Pinelog for their help and co-operation during the work.

References

Browning, J. 2013 *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological work: Strip, map and sample excavation and watching brief* ULAS Project: 13-027

Browning, J. 2011 *An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation and Watching Brief at The Old Rectory, Mowsley, Leicestershire (SP 646 889)* ULAS Report 2011-192

Wootton, J. and Lacey, J. undated *Mowsley: A Leicestershire Village* Mowsley Heritage Society

Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Services with the accession number X.A98 2013 and consists of the following:

Digital photographs

Black and white contact prints and negatives

Photo index

Site notes and records

Permatrace sheet with plan and sections

Copy of report

Finds: Animal bones

Report: 2013-118

Jennifer Browning
ULAS

Tel: 0116 252 2848

Fax: 0116 252 2614

Email: jcb9@le.ac.uk

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Appendix 1: The Animal Bones (Accession Number: X.A.98 2013)

Jennifer Browning

Introduction

This report presents the analysis of an assemblage of animal bone hand-recovered during strip, plan and sample excavations at the Old Rectory, Mowsley in Leicestershire. Two features, a ditch (context 1) and a gully (context 5), produced 107 fragments of animal bone in total. Since both contexts are undated, this report represents a simple record and description of the bones recovered.

Methodology

Specimens were identified with reference to comparative modern and ancient skeletal material held at the School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester. Information was compiled directly into a *pro forma* spreadsheet with facility for recording data on species, bone element, state of epiphysial fusion and completeness to elicit information on species proportions, skeletal representation, age and condition. Where possible, the anatomical parts present for each skeletal element were recorded using the 'zones' defined by Serjeantson (1996), with additional zones ascribed to mandibles based on Dobney and Reilly (1988). Surface preservation was assessed after Harland et al (2003). Joining fragments were re-assembled and the resulting specimen counted as a single fragment, although a record of the original number of fragments was retained.

Provenance

The bones were recovered from several sections of a ditch (context 1, cut 2) and a gully (context 5, cut 6), both north-south aligned. The ditch produced 91% of the bones. Unfortunately, no pottery or other dateable finds were recovered, which limits the conclusions that may be drawn on the origin of the remains.

Preservation and Taphonomy

Surface condition was assessed for each specimen, following Harland et al (2003), and was predominantly 'good', defined as 'lacks fresh appearance but solid; very localized flaky or powdery'.

The bones exhibited some ancient and modern breakage and re-fitting of joining fragments reduced the total from 107 to 92 fragments. Gnawing occurred on three bones in the ditch assemblage; large mammal vertebra and rib fragments and a cattle metatarsal. Two burnt bones were recovered from gully context 1, indicating that some of the bones were available to dogs prior to deposition. A cattle mandible fragment from the same context was charred, indicating exposure to direct heat, such as a cooking fire.

Taxa and Carcass Representation

The assemblage produced evidence for the main domestic species; cattle, sheep/goat and pig, (Table 1). Cattle bones dominate in the assemblage accounting for 62% of identified bones. No wild animals were identified. The small available sample means that it is not possible to usefully analyse distribution of carcass parts, however the list of identified elements is shown in Table 2 and it is evident that most regions of the body were represented.

Age Structure

Epiphyses were present on seven bones, all from context 1, which can provide an indication of age at death. Most were fused however there were two immature bones in the assemblage, an unfused pig distal metacarpal and an unfused cattle distal radius. Two mandibles in context 5 may have been a pair and were from a calf. The deciduous fourth premolars were erupted but unworn, therefore indicating an age of no more than a few months. A shaft fragment from an infant/juvenile mammal of sheep or pig size was also observed.

Pathologies and Measurements

A rib from a medium sized mammal (sheep or pig) exhibited signs of a healed fracture.

No measurements were taken as the material is not dated.

Butchery and Articulated Bones

Butchery marks were present on ten bones, predominantly from cattle. Marks produced by both knife and cleaver were observed indicating that the carcasses had been divided and meat filleted from the bone.

Discussion

The total assemblage comprised 92 well-preserved bones from two features. The majority of bones were recovered from ditch (context 1), which may be a boundary feature, with a smaller amount from a gully (context 5). Many of the undiagnostic fragments were from ribs and vertebrae and probably belonged to cattle. The excavations produced 26 hand-recovered identifiable specimens, comprising 28% of the assemblage. Cattle bones were most common (62%) however sheep and pig were also represented. The assemblage contained mixed waste rather than debris from a single type of activity. There were small numbers of burnt and a greater number of butchered bones, probably waste from carcass portioning and consumption. There were a high proportion of rib fragments (18%), which are often associated with table waste.

References

- Dobney, K and Reilly, K. 1988 'A method for recording archaeological animal bones: the use of diagnostic zones' *Circaea* 5, 79-96
- Harland, J. F., Barrett, J. H., Carrott, J., Dodney, K. and Jaques, D. (2003) The York System: an integrated zooarchaeological database for research and teaching. *Internet Archaeology* 13: (http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue13/harland_toc.html)
- Serjeantson, D. 1996 'The animal bones' in S. Needham and T. Spence 1996 *Refuse and Disposal at Area 16 East Runnymede. Vol. II Runnymede Bridge Research Excavations*. London: British Museum Press, 194-223

Tables

Table 1: Distribution of taxa within the assemblage (by context)

Taxa	Context 5	Context 1	Total
cattle	3	13	16
sheep/goat		5	5
sheep		1	1
pig		3	3
domestic fowl		1	1
large mammal	2	27	29
medium mammal	3	20	23
indeterminate mml		13	13
indeterminate bird		1	1
Total	8	84	92

Table 2: List of identified elements

Taxa	Context	
	5	1
cattle		
femur		1
horncore fragment		1
mandible	3	1
metatarsal		1
pelvis		3
radius		1
skull fragment		1
tibia		2
tooth fragment		1
ulna		1
domestic fowl		
coracoid		1
pig		
maxilla		1
metacarpal		1
tibia		1
sheep		
skull fragment		1
sheep/goat		
molar upper		3
pelvis		1
skull fragment		1
large mammal		
axis		1
rib head		1
rib shaft	1	9
shaft fragment	1	10
skull fragment		3
vertebra lumbar		1

vertebra fragment		2
medium mammal		
femur		1
metapodial		1
rib shaft	2	4
shaft fragment	1	14
indeterminate mml		
mandible fragment		1
shaft fragment		12
indeterminate bird		
shaft fragment		1
Total	8	84

Table 3: Butchery marks on bones (type of mark in brackets: ‘cut marks’ were produced with a knife, ‘chop marks’ were produced with axe or cleaver)

	cattle	pig	large mammal	medium mammal	Total
<i>Context 5</i>					
rib shaft (chop)				1	1
rib shaft (cut and chop)			1		1
<i>Context 1</i>					
femur (chop)	1				1
mandible (cut)	1				1
metatarsal (chop)	1				1
pelvis (cut/chop)	1				1
pelvis (cut)	2				2
tibia (chop)		1			1
tibia (cut)	1				1
Total	7	1	1	1	10

Table 4: Epiphysial fusion (f=fused; u=unfused)

Context	Taxa	Bone	Proximal	Distal
1	cattle	tibia		f
1	cattle	radius		u
1	cattle	pelvis	f	
1	large mammal	v lumbar	f	f
1	pig	tibia		f
1	pig	metacarpal	f	u
1	medium mammal	metapodial	f	

Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay
University of Leicester Archaeological
Services (ULAS)
University of Leicester,
University Road,
Leicester LE1 7RH

T: +44 (0)116 252 2848

F: +44 (0)116 252 2614

E: ulas@le.ac.uk

w: www.le.ac.uk/ulas



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