



# University of Leicester

## Archaeological Services

An archaeological field evaluation  
(trial trenching) at 55 Oxford  
Street, Leicester

(SK 5856 0393)

Mathew Morris



ULAS Report No 2014-049

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**An archaeological field evaluation (trial trenching)  
at 55 Oxford Street, Leicester  
(SK 5856 0393)**

**Mathew Morris**

*With contributions from Jennifer Browning, Nicholas J. Cooper & Deborah Sawday*

**For: HPL Global (Global Homes and Properties Ltd)  
Planning Application ref. 20121704**

Approved by:



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# **An archaeological field evaluation (trial trenching) at 55 Oxford Street, Leicester (SK 5856 0393)**

Mathew Morris

## **Summary**

*An archaeological field evaluation (trial trenching) was carried out at 55 Oxford Street, Leicester (SK 5856 0393) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between 19 February and 21 February 2014. Work was undertaken for HPL Global (Global Homes and Properties Ltd) in order to establish the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits which may be present, in order that an assessment may be made of the impact of any proposed development on the buried remains. Three machine excavated trenches, sampling 9% of the site, identified extensive areas of modern disturbance associated with the site's previous use as industrial premises. However, small islands of stratified soil and archaeology survived in all three trenches. In Trench 1, on the northern side of the site, a mid-late 2nd century Roman ditch and later medieval or early post-medieval pits were noted; features and soil layers in the other two trenches remained undated. The Roman ditch most likely formed part of a property extending east from the projected line of the Roman Tripontium road which should cross the site. It produced evidence for metal-working activity taking place in the immediate vicinity and one human bone found in the ditch fill may also indicate that there are human burials in the immediate area. One of the later medieval or early post-medieval pits produced 15th and 16th century pottery and large quantities of butchered animal bone, most likely representing the disposal of industrial or table waste in the backyards of properties fronting onto Oxford Street to the east. The archive will be held by Leicester City Museums under the accession number A5.2014.*

## **Introduction**

During February 2014 University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological field evaluation at 55 Oxford Street in Leicester (SK 5856 0393 - Figure 1). The work was undertaken for HPL Global (Global Homes and Properties Ltd) in order to establish the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits which may be present, in order that an assessment may be made of the impact of any proposed development on the buried remains.

In March 2013, Leicester City Council granted an extension of time-limit and conditional approval for the construction of a new multi-storey student accommodation block on the site (app. no. 20121704). Conditions 4 and 5 of the planning permission required that a programme of archaeological work be undertaken in accordance with an approved written scheme of investigation (Buckley 2014) before work commenced. This was in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG 2012); the Leicester City Archaeologist, as archaeological advisor to Leicester City Council, requiring the investigation to be undertaken in order that the potential impact of the development on any archaeology could be assessed and an appropriate mitigation strategy implemented.

Archaeological work was carried out over three days between 19 February and 21 February, 2014 by staff of ULAS on behalf of HPL Global. This report presents the final results of the archaeological investigation.

## **Site Location, Geology and Topography**

55 Oxford Street is on the west side of Oxford Street, between that street and Grange Lane, approximately 720m south-west of Leicester city centre (SK 5856 0393 - Figure 1 & Figure 2). The work area comprises c.588 sq m of land formerly occupied by industrial premises but presently vacant.

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet 156 (Leicester) shows that the underlying geology is likely to consist of bedrock deposits of mudstone belonging to the Branscombe Mudstone Formation. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2008). The site lies on ground which gently slopes down to the west, from c.61.5m aOD on the Oxford Street frontage to c.60m aOD on the Grange Lane frontage.

## **Archaeological and Historical Background**

The archaeological potential of the site's environs has been highlighted previously by a desk-based assessment prepared by ULAS for an adjacent development at 52 Grange Lane (Harvey 2004). This showed that this part of Leicester, to the south of the Roman and medieval walled area within the town's southern suburb, is an area of known archaeological potential. Archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the site at Grange Lane, Bonners Lane, Mill Lane, Oxford Street and York Road have all uncovered significant remains of Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval date.

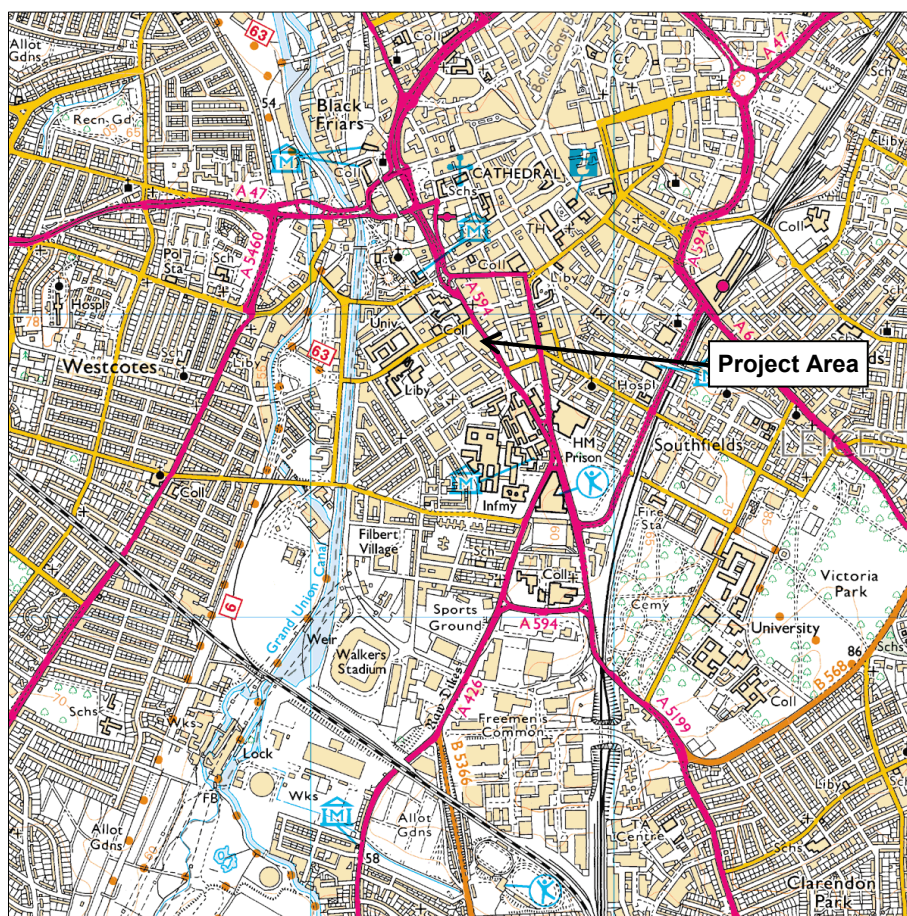
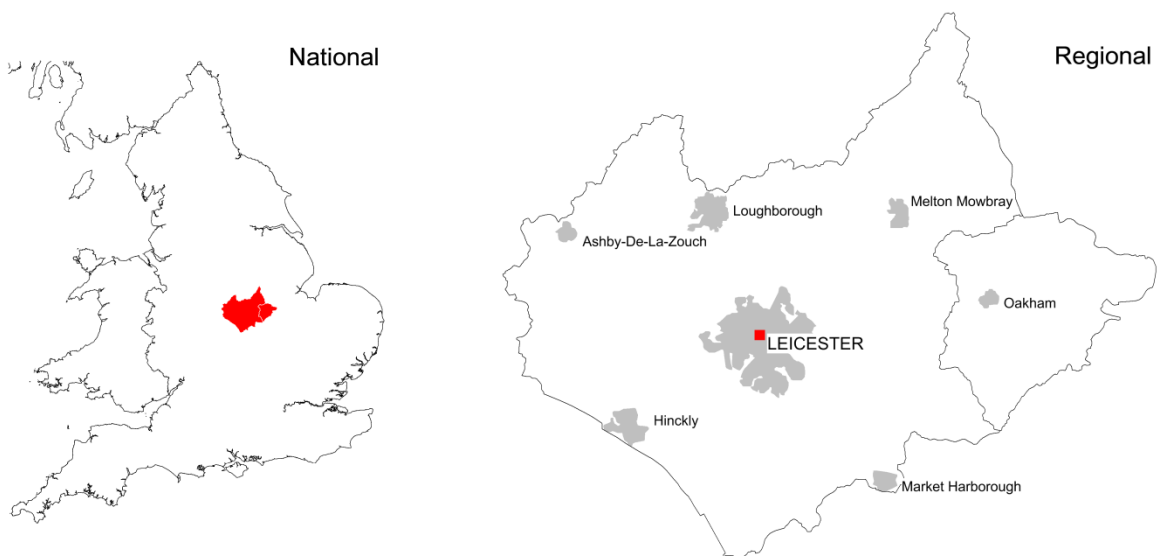


Figure 1: Location Plans with project area highlighted

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The excavation at 52 Grange Lane (Figure 2) produced well-preserved and stratified remains from the Roman and medieval periods (Thomas 2005, 2010). Four early Roman urned cremation burials and an associated timber building were apparently part of a small cemetery dating the 1st century AD lying adjacent to the projected line of the Roman road from the south gate of Leicester to the Roman town of *Tripontium* (Caves Inn in Warwickshire). At least three phases of 3rd-4th century AD Roman roadside occupation included cobbled surfaces, pits, ditches and structural remains as well as a corn-drier and a stone-lined well. In places, an unexpectedly deep sequence of deposits was revealed – particularly in the northern half of the site. Medieval activity associated with backyards of properties fronting Oxford Street included a sequence of substantial boundary ditches running along the Grange Lane frontage and a series of deep cess pits or wells, some of which contained exceptionally well-preserved environmental evidence.

Elsewhere, an archaeological evaluation at 85-89 Oxford Street revealed evidence of a Roman cobbled surface overlying a probable ditch near to the Oxford Street frontage (Clarke 2003). A partially revealed ditch also contained hand-made pottery of either Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon origin. To the west a curving medieval ditch may have been associated with a windmill.

Excavations at Bonners Lane (Finn 1994, 2004) and at De Montfort University (Morris 2010), to the north of the site, have produced evidence of the *Tripontium* road which would suggest that its projected line would pass across 55 Oxford Street. Evidence for Roman buildings fronting on to this street, as well as pitting were also excavated. An Anglo-Saxon timber building was also found at Bonners Lane, representing the first structure from this period to be found in the city, and is considered to be of regional importance. Timber structural remains of the medieval period relating to properties fronting onto Oxford Street (medieval Southgates) were also revealed as well as ditches and pits from associated backyards. Evidence for post-medieval craft activities indicated hide processing on both sites while several large ditches represented the remains of Leicester's Civil War defences.

To the east of Oxford Street, on the corner with York Road, excavations have revealed a similar level of archaeological survival (Gossip 1999a, 1999b). The Roman period was represented by a complex of boundary ditches and a spread of burials associated with an extensive cemetery outside the town wall. Another Saxon timber building was found on the site and evidence for medieval suburban development, including structural remains, pitting and wells, was also recorded.

Further evidence of Leicester's Civil War defences was revealed during excavations at Mill Lane, on the corner with Grange Lane to the north of the present site (Finn 2002). Here also, evidence of prehistoric, Roman and medieval occupation outside the town wall were discovered.

Most recently, an archaeological excavation undertaken by ULAS on the site immediately to the south of the present work area, at 61 Oxford Street, revealed a Roman road and evidence of post-holes, pits and spreads suggesting roadside settlement (Higgins 2010). Covering the Roman deposits were medieval and post-medieval layers and features probably associated with backyards of properties which fronted on to either Oxford Street or Grange Lane.

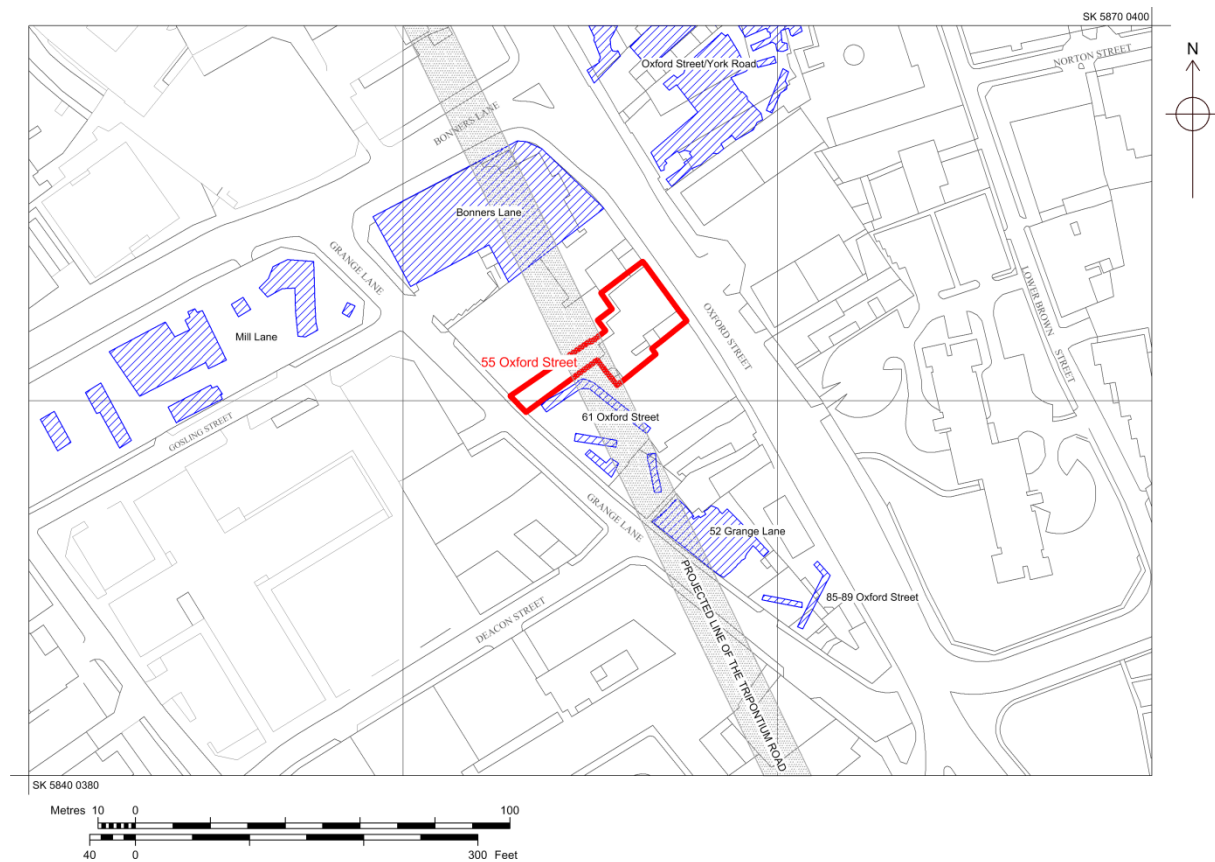


Figure 2: Location plan of project area (red), showing other archaeological work mentioned in text (blue).

## Archaeological Objectives

The principle aims of the archaeological excavation were:

- 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.

All archaeological work will be considered in light of the following East Midlands Research Agenda topics (Knight *et. al.* 2012):

- **ROMAN:** *Growth of Urban Centres (5.3):* 5.3.1. How were towns organised, what roles did they perform and how have their morphology and functions changed over time? 5.3.5. How and why did the urban landscape change in the late Roman period, and what roles may fortifications have played in this period? *Roads and Waterways (5.7):* 5.7.1. Can the chronology of road construction and links between road building and campaigns of conquest be clarified? 5.7.4. How may roads and waterways have impacted upon established communities and how may roads have influenced urban morphology?
- **EARLY MEDIEVAL:** *Roads and Rivers – transport routes and cultural boundaries (6.3):* 6.3.1. To what extent were Roman roads used and maintained from the 5th century and may some have acted as social and political boundaries?
- **HIGH MEDIEVAL:** *Urbanism (7.1):* 7.1.1. How did the major towns and smaller market towns of the region develop after the Norman Conquest, both within the urban core and in suburban and extra mural areas?



Figure 3: 55 Oxford Street before archaeological investigation, looking east towards Oxford Street

## Methodology

During the evaluation, modern overburden and soil was removed in level spits under continuous archaeological supervision down to the uppermost archaeological deposits or the natural substratum, depending on which was reached first. This was carried out with tracked 8 tonne 360° mechanical excavators using a 1.6m wide, toothless ditching bucket, or when necessary, a 0.6m toothed bucket (modern overburden only).

All trenches, open areas, exposed sections and spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. Features were hand cleaned, planned, photographed and sample excavated as appropriate. Field notes were recorded on pro-forma ULAS urban trench recording forms whilst stratigraphic units were given a unique context number and recorded on pro-forma ULAS context sheets. Trench and feature plans/sections were drawn at appropriate scales and tied into the National Grid using an electronic distance measurer (EDM). Spot heights were taken as appropriate and tied into the Ordnance Survey Datum using a benchmark of 59.59m aOD on a drain cover on Grange Lane immediately adjacent to the site (high determined from plan supplied by client). A



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

All work followed the approved written scheme of investigation (Buckley 2014) and the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (2008) and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LMARS).

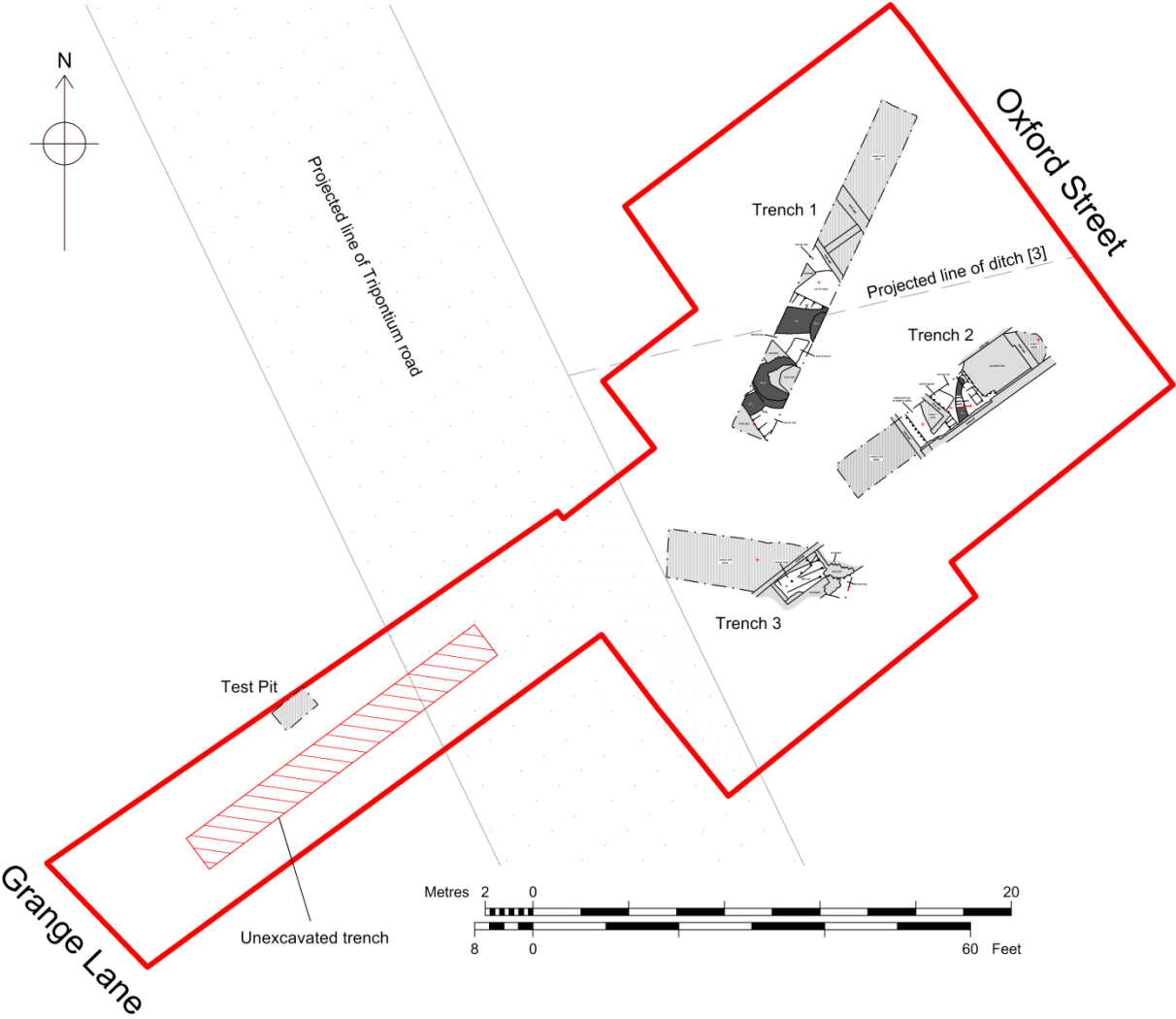


Figure 4: Plan of project area, showing trench locations.

### Results

The written scheme of investigation (Buckley 2014) originally called for the investigation of four 15m by 1.6m (96sq m) trial trenches to achieve a 15% sample of the site as requested by the City Archaeologist, three to be placed in the larger part of the site fronting onto Oxford Street and one to be placed on the Grange Lane side (Figure 4).

However, ground conditions (unbreakable concrete slab covering the western half of the site and a request by the client to not go within 3m of any party-partition walls) meant that only three of the four trenches could be excavated, totalling c.55sq m (a 9% sample). In light of the results (see below) from the three excavated trenches, a site visit by the City Archaeologist on 19 February 2014 deemed this a suitable outcome for this phase of work.



Figure 5: Left – Trench 1, looking north-east; top – section across Roman ditch [3], looking south-east; above – section across late medieval/early post-medieval pit [5], looking north-east.

### Trench 1

Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	Surface level (m aOD)		Ave. level of archaeology (m aOD)
					SSW end	NNE end	
15	1.60	24	1	1.20	61.59	61.49	60.46
<b>Interval (m) from SSW</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>to NNE end</b>
<b>Overburden depth</b>	0.75	0.55	0.60	1.10	1.20	1.15	
<b>Sub layer(s)</b>	0.45	0.65	0.50	-	-	-	
<b>Top of Natural?</b>	-	-	1.10	-	-	-	
<b>Base of trench</b>	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.10	1.20	1.15	

Trench 1 was excavated across the site's northern quarter on an approximate north-north-east to south-south-west orientation, with Trench 2 located to the east and Trench 3 to the south (Figure 4). Initial machining removed c.0.55-1.2m of modern overburden, comprising a compacted surface of mill-waste covering brick and concrete rubble left over from the demolition of buildings which had previously occupied the site.

Subsurface deposits had been extensively disturbed by brick and concrete foundations along the entirety of Trench 1 (Figure 5 & Figure 8). Across the south-south-western half of the trench, this disturbance was fairly intermittent with sub-soils and archaeology surviving in islands between the modern wall lines. Modern overburden covered two soil layers. The uppermost was dark brown silty-sand; whilst the lower was a slightly paler brown silty-sand. Both were mixed with occasional charcoal flecks and together they formed a c.0.45-0.65m thick layer overlying the natural substratum and archaeological features. Natural substratum was very firm red clay, occasionally mottled pale greyish-blue, containing scattered pockets of orange sandy-gravel.

Two probable pits were observed in the base of Trench 1. Not enough of Pit 1 was seen within the excavation area to be able to determine its date or purpose, but in section, Pit 2 appeared to be dug down through the sub-soils and may, therefore be relatively modern.

Pit 1 partially truncated an earlier linear feature [3] which ran across the trench on an east/west orientation. This ditch was c.1.1m wide and c.0.45m deep with concave sides and a flat base, dug into the natural substratum beneath the overlying sub-soils. Filling the ditch was greenish-grey silty-sand (4) containing occasional charcoal flecks and small rounded pebbles as well as a good quantity of mid-late 2nd century Roman material including pot, bone, slag and tile.

To the south was another possible linear feature or pit [5]. Interpretation was difficult because of the damage to it from Pit 2 to the north and a brick wall to the south, but the feature was c.0.9m wide and c.0.25m deep, perhaps orientated north-east/south-west, with near vertical sides and a flat base. It was also dug into the natural substratum. Covering the base of the feature was a thin layer of brownish-red silty-clay (6), possibly accumulated soil erosion from the feature's sides. Filling the rest of the feature was dark brown silty-sand (7) containing occasional charcoal flecks and small rounded pebbles as well as a good quantity of later medieval or early post-medieval (15th-16th century) material including pot and bone.

Across the north-north-eastern half of the trench a deep, rubble-filled cellar had truncated deeper than the surface of the natural substratum. A test pit inside the cellar showed that it was over 1.8m deep with no sign of the cellar floor and it was clear that no archaeology could have survived its construction.



Figure 6: Left – Trench 2, looking west; right – linear feature [2], looking south

## Trench 2

Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	Surface level (m aOD)		Ave. level of archaeology (m aOD)	
					NE end	SW end		
10	1.6	16	0.88	1.20	61.57	61.67	60.59	
Interval (m) from NE end	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	to SW end 8
Overburden depth	0.47	0.47	0.57	0.68	0.59	0.71	1.20	1.20
Sub layer(s)	BRICK WALL			0.22	0.31	0.19	CELLAR	
Top of Natural?	-	-	-	0.90	0.90	-	-	-
Base of trench	0.88	0.90	0.88	1.06	1.04	0.90	1.20	1.20

Trench 2 was excavated across the site's eastern quarter on an approximately north-east to south-west orientation, with Trench 1 located to the north and Trench 3 to the south-west (Figure 4). Initial machining removed c.0.47-1.2m of modern overburden, comprising a compacted surface of mill-waste covering brick and concrete rubble left over from the demolition of buildings which had previously occupied the site.

Subsurface deposits had been extensively disturbed by brick and concrete foundations along the entirety of Trench 2 (Figure 6 & Figure 9). The north-eastern third of the trench, sandwiched between two modern north-east/south-west orientated brick walls, was covered with a thick concrete slab floor too large to remove. The concrete appeared to be resting directly on top of natural substratum, suggesting that the historic ground level

across this area of the site had been significantly reduced. Sub-layers seen in section contained clay-pipe fragments and relatively modern building rubble and no early soil or subsoil was noted. Across the south-western third of the trench was another deep, rubble-filled cellar. It was dug into the natural substratum and a test pit inside it showed that it was over 2m deep with no sign of the cellar floor and it was clear that no archaeology could have survived its construction.

One small area of natural substratum was observed in the base of the trench between *c.*3.5m and *c.*5m from the trench's north-eastern end. This was very firm red clay, occasionally mottled pale greyish-blue, containing scattered pockets of orange sandy-gravel. Dug into it was one possible archaeological feature, a curvi-linear gully [2] curving eastwards at its northern end and continuing south beyond the excavation area. The gully was *c.*0.24-0.56 wide and *c.*0.42m deep, and had very steep to near-vertical sides and a tapered base and appeared to terminate at its north end. Filling it was greyish-orange sand and gravel (1) containing abundant poorly sorted small rounded and sub-rounded pebbles, small lenses of grey clayey-silt and rare quantities of small charcoal flecks. No finds were recovered from the fill and it is possible that this feature is geological in origin; perhaps a naturally eroded gully filled with alluvial sand and gravel, the silt and charcoal inclusions being a product of bioturbation.



Figure 7: Left – Trench 3, looking east; right – the eastern end of Trench 3, looking east

### Trench 3

Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	Surface level (m aOD)		Ave. level of archaeology (m aOD)	
					E end	W end		
7.5	2	15	1.20	1.40	61.56	61.59	60.49	
Interval (m) from E end	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	to W end 7
Overburden depth	0.85	1.40	1.20	1.32	1.20	1.30	1.20	1.00
Sub layer(s)	0.55	BRICK WALL			CELLAR			
Top of Natural?	1.40	-	-	1.32	-	-	-	-
Base of trench	1.40	1.40	1.20	1.32	1.20	1.30	1.20	1.00

Trench 3 was excavated across the centre of the site on an approximately east to west orientation, with both Trench 1 and Trench 2 to the north (Figure 4). Initial machining removed *c.*0.85-1.4m of modern overburden, comprising a compacted surface of mill-waste covering brick and concrete rubble left over from the demolition of buildings which had previously occupied the site.

Subsurface deposits had been extensively disturbed by brick and concrete foundations along the entirety of Trench 3 and much of the western two-thirds of the trench crossed a deep, rubble-filled cellar (Figure 10). This had been dug deeper than the top of the natural substratum and it was unlikely that any archaeological deposits could have survived its construction.

Although extensively disturbed at the eastern end of the trench, two small islands of stratigraphy were observed surviving between modern wall foundations (Figure 7). Modern overburden covered two sub-layers. The uppermost was a *c.*0.3m thick layer of very dark grey clayey-silt containing common charcoal flecks and occasional small rounded pebbles; whilst the lower was a *c.*0.25m thick layer of brownish-grey clayey-silt containing common red clay inclusions and occasional small rounded pebbles and charcoal flecks. The lowest soil overlay natural red clay.

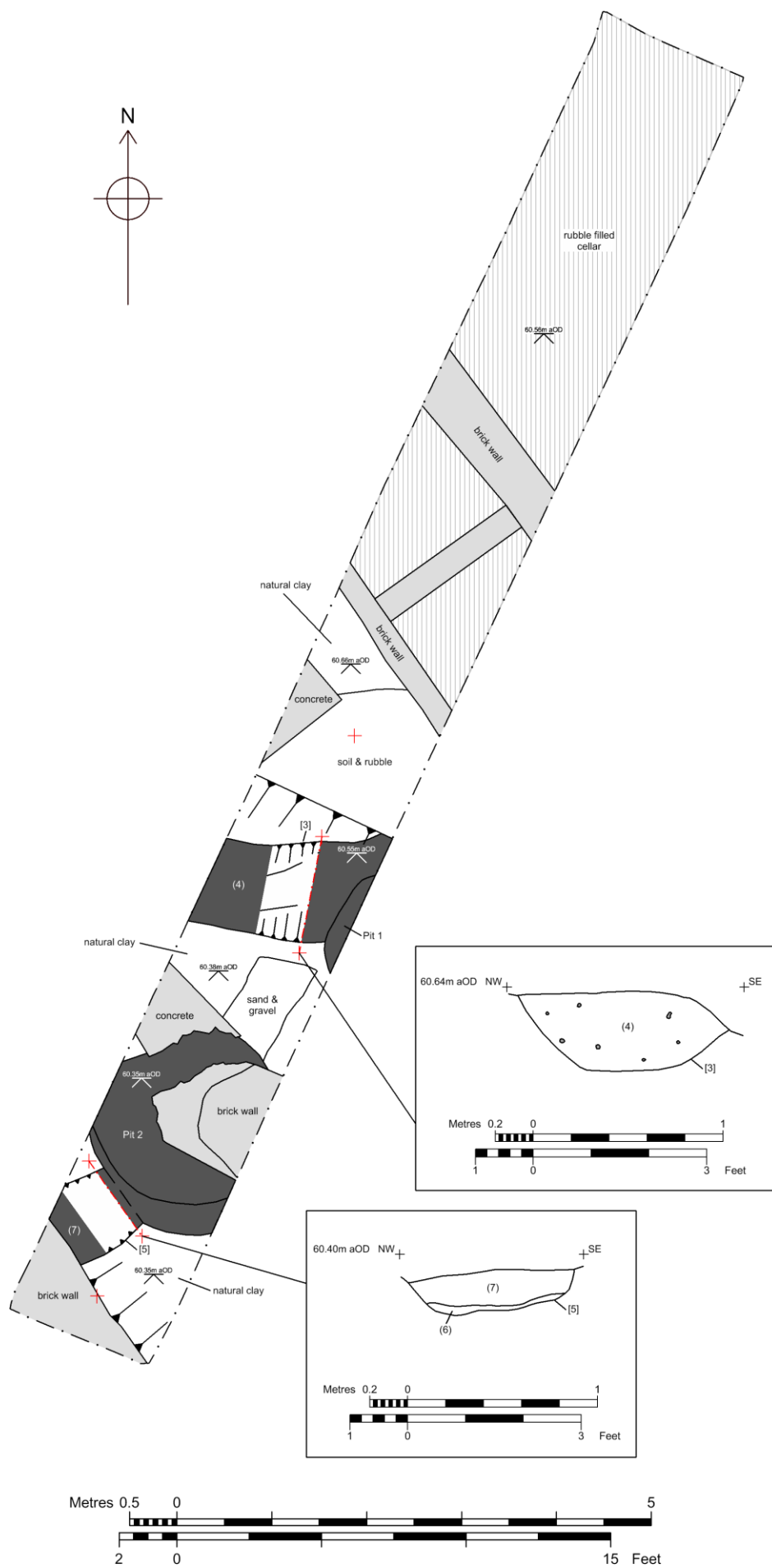


Figure 8: Plan of Trench 1

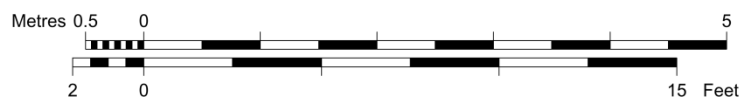
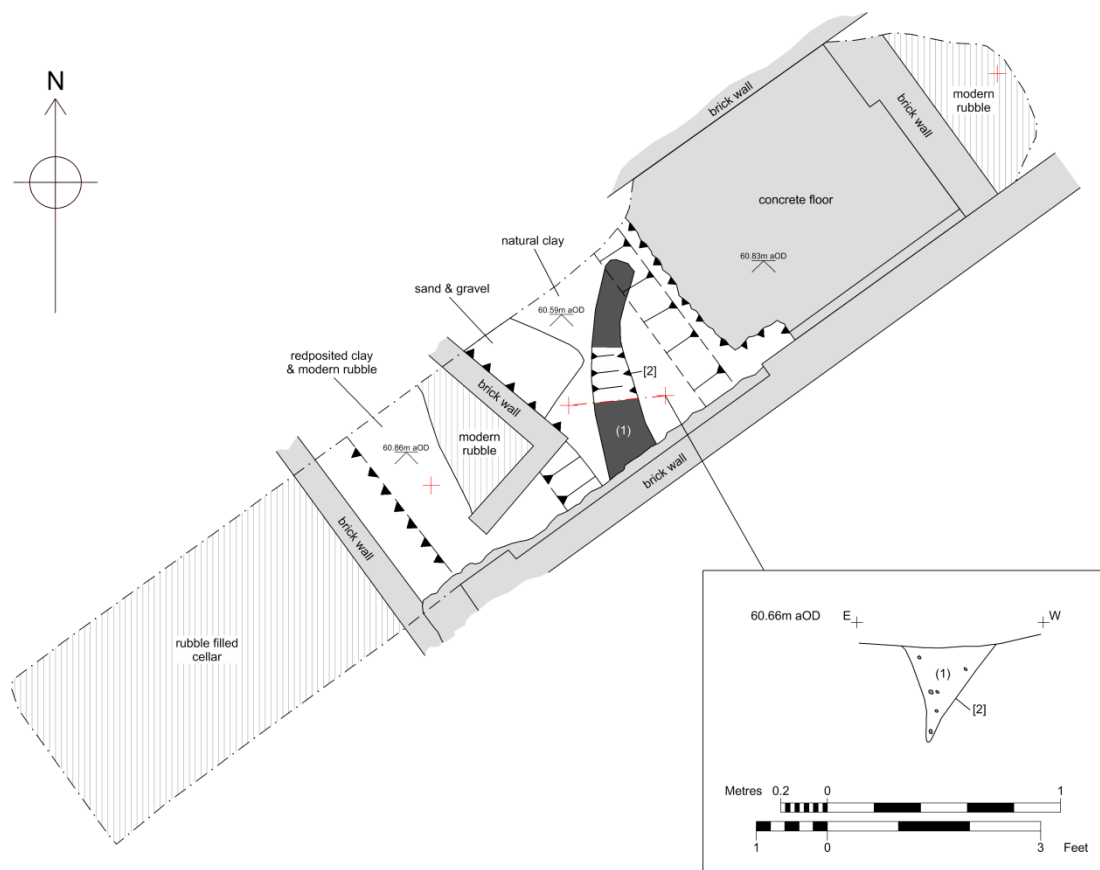


Figure 9: Plan of Trench 2

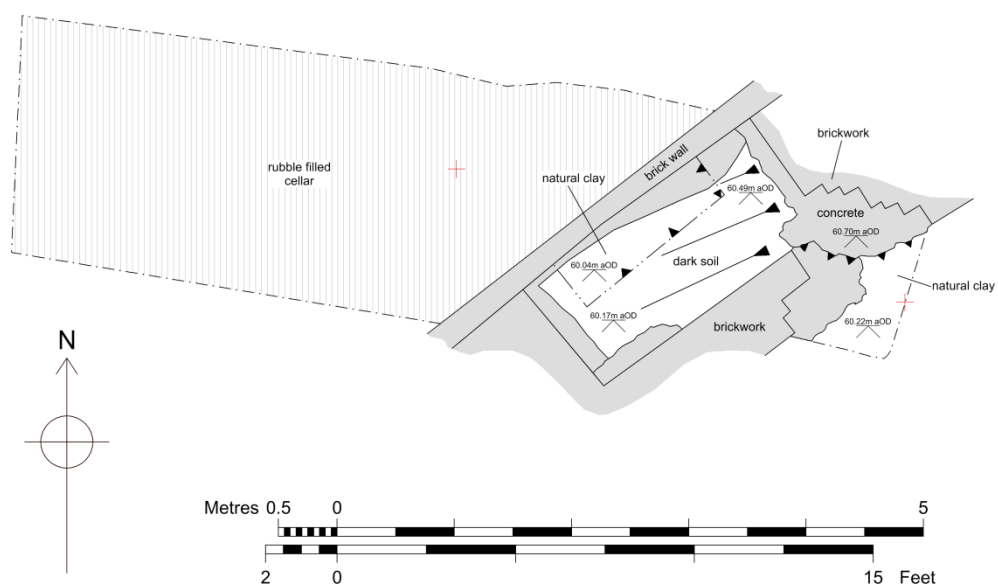


Figure 10: Plan of Trench 3

## Test Pit

In order to determine the depth of the partition wall along the northern side of the site a test pit was excavated close to the Grange Lane frontage (Figure 4). This uncovered a concrete slab surface beneath c.0.1m of mill-waste and work was halted when it became clear that this could not be removed without breaking equipment.

## Finds

### Roman pottery

Nicholas J. Cooper

#### Introduction

A total of 23 sherds of Roman pottery weighing 532g were recovered from (4) [3] in Trench 1. The high average sherd weight of 23g is coupled with a high proportion of joining sherds and low levels of abrasion, indicating a relatively undisturbed group. The material was classified using the Leicestershire Roman pottery form and fabric series (Pollard 1994, 110-114) and quantified by sherd count and weight. The full record is presented below (Table 1).

#### Results

Table 1: Quantified record of Roman pottery from the Evaluation

Trench	Context	Cut	Fabric	Form	Type	Sherds	Weight	Dating
1	4	3	CGSamian	Bowl	Form 37	1	7	M-L 2nd
1	4	3	WW2	Flagon	DevRing	2	102	c.120-160
1	4	3	WW2	Flagon	Misc	1	10	L1st-2nd
1	4	3	OW2	bottle	ribbed	7	98	2nd
1	4	3	BB1	jar	HB12	1	35	c.120-160
1	4	3	GW5	jar	neckedbead	3	95	2nd
1	4	3	GW5	jar	triang bead	1	20	2nd
1	4	3	GW5	jar	barb dot dec	7	165	L1st-E2nd
<b>Total</b>						<b>23</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>Av.Sh.Wt 23g</b>

#### Discussion

The group can be relatively closely dated to the middle or later decades of the 2nd century. The most diagnostic material includes a body sherd from a Form 37 decorated bowl made at Lezoux in Central Gaul in the mid-late 2nd century which is supported by the occurrence of the rim of a south-east Dorset black burnished ware (BB1) jar rim of Holbrook and Bidwell Type 12 (1991, 95, fig.27) of c.120-160. There is the complete rim, neck and upper body of a devolved ring-necked flagon in white ware with a beaded upper ring which has the same date range and an unusual bottle in oxidised ware with a ribbed or corrugated shoulder which is paralleled by a 2nd century flagon form (Gillam 1970 no.9) dated c.140-180.

### Medieval and post-medieval pottery

Deborah Sawday

The medieval pottery, five sherds weighing 132 grams was examined under an x20 binocular microscope and classified using the ULAS fabric series (Sawday 2009). The results are shown below, (Table 2). The pottery had a terminal date in the mid-16th century.

Table 2: The medieval pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams) by context.

Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos	Grams	Comments
7 [5] tr1	CC1- Chilvers Coton A ware	1	17	c.1250-1400
7 [5]	MS3 – Medieval Sandy 3	1	69	Jug strap handle stub, 14 <sup>th</sup> C+
7 [5]	MP2 – Midland Purple	1	6	under fired, c.1375-1550
7 [5]	CG – Calcite Gritted	1	6	jug neck, glazed, later medieval – unclassified fabric.
7 [5]	MP3 – Midland Purple	1	34	Jug rim, c.1375-1550

Roman context (4) [3] also contained a fragment of Roman wall tile (475g) and small fragments (395g) of vitrified hearth lining and hearth slag indicative of metal working activity in the vicinity.

Later medieval context (7) [5] contained a single angular fragment of granite rubble (110g) with mortar attached, clearly used in construction.

### Animal bone

Jennifer Browning

#### Introduction and Dating

The animal bones recovered during hand-excavation from an evaluation at Oxford Street, Leicester were assessed to evaluate preservation and variety and therefore provide an indication of the faunal potential, should the site progress to excavation. Bones were recovered from features dating from the Roman and the medieval/post-medieval periods.

#### The Assemblage

The current sample consists of 43 fragments from two different features (Table 3). The bones were generally well-preserved and therefore have the potential to provide information on the animal species exploited, as well as modifications such as butchery, burning, gnawing and pathologies.

A Roman feature (4) [3] produced an assemblage which appeared to contain bones derived from a mixture of different sources. The shaft of a human tibia, presumably disturbed from a nearby grave during re-digging, was identified alongside elements from sheep/goat, dog, and horse.

By contrast, the medieval bones from context (7) [5] appear to represent a fairly coherent group. They were predominantly well-preserved (classed as 'good', following Harland et al 2003). Cattle, sheep/goat, pig and domestic fowl were identified and a mixture of cranial and post-cranial elements was recovered. Butchery marks were observed on 60% of the bones, consisting of both fine knife marks and chops made by an axe or cleaver. The butchery marks were typical for carcasses processed for consumption and included several examples of sheep and cattle vertebrae split sagittally, as well as chops through long bones that were clearly designed to create portions or cuts of meat. Several rib fragments cut to a similar length probably derived from portioning of the rib slab. Gnawing was rare but tooth-marks noted on a domestic fowl bone appeared to be feline. The bones appear to represent a mixture of butchery and table waste and were probably deposited rapidly.

Table 3: Abridged catalogue of bones recovered (Key: lge mml= large mammal (indeterminate cattle/horse/red deer size) and med mml (sheep/goat/pig/dog size))

Cut	Context	Preservation	NISP	Taxa	Bone	Prox	Dist	Butchery
5	7	2	5	lge mml	rib shaft			P, T,
5	7	2	1	cattle	humerus		f	P, T,
5	7	2	1	cattle	phalanx 1	f	f	
5	7	2	1	lge mml	thoracic vert.	u	u	P
5	7	2	1	med mml	lumbar vert.	f	f	P
5	7	2	1	sheep/goat	femur			P
5	7	2	1	sheep/goat	femur		u	P
5	7	2	1	sheep/goat	tibia	f		P
5	7	4	1	pig	ulna			
5	7	2	1	cattle	scapula	u		
5	7	2	1	sheep/goat	mandible			
5	7	2	2	med mml	rib shaft			
5	7	2	1	pig	skull			
5	7	2	4	indeterminate	fragments			
5	7	1	1	sheep/goat	occipital condyle			T
5	7	2	1	sheep/goat	maxilla and orbit			



Cut	Context	Preservation	NISP	Taxa	Bone	Prox	Dist	Butchery
5	7	2	1	cattle	radius			PT
5	7	2	1	lge mml	lumbar vert.			P
5	7	2	2	lge mml	thoracic vert.			P
5	7	2	1	pig	mandible			T
5	7	2	1	pig	pelvis			T
5	7	2	1	cattle	pelvis			P
5	7	2	1	domestic fowl	tibio-tarsus		f	
3	4	2	1	human	tibia			
3	4	3	1	med mml	rib frag?			
3	4	4	1	lge mml	shaft fragment			
3	4	3	1	sheep/goat	upper m3			
3	4	3	1	dog	maxilla			
3	4	3	1	sheep/goat	femur			
3	4	3	1	dog	tibia			
3	4	3	1	dog	tibia		f	
3	4	3	2	indeterminate	shaft fragment			
3	4	3	1	<i>equid</i>	radius	f		

### Archaeological Context and Potential

Two features produced zooarchaeological evidence, dating from the mid-late 2nd century (Roman) and 15th-16th century (late medieval/early post-medieval). Among these particular samples the late medieval/post-medieval bones appear to have more archaeological potential. No bones from species such as fish, small birds or small mammals were seen but there is no reason why, if present, these should not be recovered through the adoption of an appropriate sampling strategy during excavation.

Previous zooarchaeological work carried out in the vicinity has included assemblages large and small, dating from the early Roman through to the post-medieval and modern periods. The mounting evidence is contributing to knowledge of diet, environment, location of crafts and industries, waste disposal, economy and husbandry in and around Leicester. Nearby assemblages including Bonners Lane (Baxter 2004), York Road/Oxford Street (Browning 1999) and De Montfort University (Browning 2010) could provide good comparative material. An appropriate excavation strategy should include provisions for sampling of features to recover small bones, which can shed light on environmental conditions, allow the recovery of small species which are seldom recovered by hand, and provide a better foundation for assessing the significance of medium-sized and smaller animals. The results should be considered in conjunction with environmental and other evidence from the site (Monckton 2006, 277).

It is therefore hoped that recovery of a larger sample at the current site could provide valuable insights into the use of animal resources, which would complement the results from other excavations and continue to expand on our knowledge of the economic life of mural and extra-mural Leicester.

## Discussion

### *Assessment of the archaeological evidence*

Overall the results of the archaeological investigation were positive, with recorded archaeological features in Trench 1 and Trench 2, and the possibility of surviving stratified deposits identified in the vicinity of Trench 3. Evidence from Trench 1 is consistent with Roman and later medieval/early post-medieval occupation recorded on other sites in Leicester's historic southern suburb, namely domestic and industrial activity occurring in properties established along the *Tripontium* road, Oxford Street and Grange Lane.

Although too little of Roman ditch [3] was seen during the investigation, to confidently establish its alignment, it appears to broadly extend at right-angles away from the projected line of the *Tripontium* road (Figure 4). Pottery from the ditch fill could be closely dated to the latter half of the 2nd century AD, and the lack of abrasion on the pottery sherds, coupled with the presence of fragments of wall tile, vitrified hearth lining and hearth slag suggest

that domestic occupation and industrial activity, most likely metal working, were occurring in the immediate vicinity.

The presence of a human bone in the ditch fill may also indicate that there are human burials in the vicinity, perhaps ‘boundary burials’ such as those found buried ostensibly along property boundaries on other sites along Oxford Street and York Road (Gossip 1999a & 1999b), or as part of the wider extra-mural Roman cemetery known to spread along the southern edge of the town in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.

The later medieval/early post-medieval pits are consistent with ‘backyard’ activity of properties along the Oxford Street frontage. Reliable historic maps, dating back to William Stukeley’s map of Leicester published in 1722; show that the area of land between Oxford Street and Grange Lane was already extensively built up by the early 18th century. Whilst other archaeological excavations in the vicinity have demonstrated that there has rarely been a break in the occupation of the south suburb since the Roman period. The presence of large quantities of butchered animal bone in pit [5] together with 15th and 16th century pottery most likely represents the disposal of industrial, commercial and/or table waste from a property on the west side of Oxford Street.

### *Assessment of the archaeological potential*

The archaeological investigation established that stratified archaeological deposits survived across the eastern half of the site, fronting onto Oxford Street, at a level of 60.55m aOD (Trench 1), 60.59m aOD (Trench 2) and 60.49m aOD (Trench 3). This was typically between 0.9m and 1.4m below present ground level. Natural substratum was seen in Trench 1 at 60.38m aOD, in Trench 2 at 60.59m aOD and in Trench 3 at 60.22m aOD.

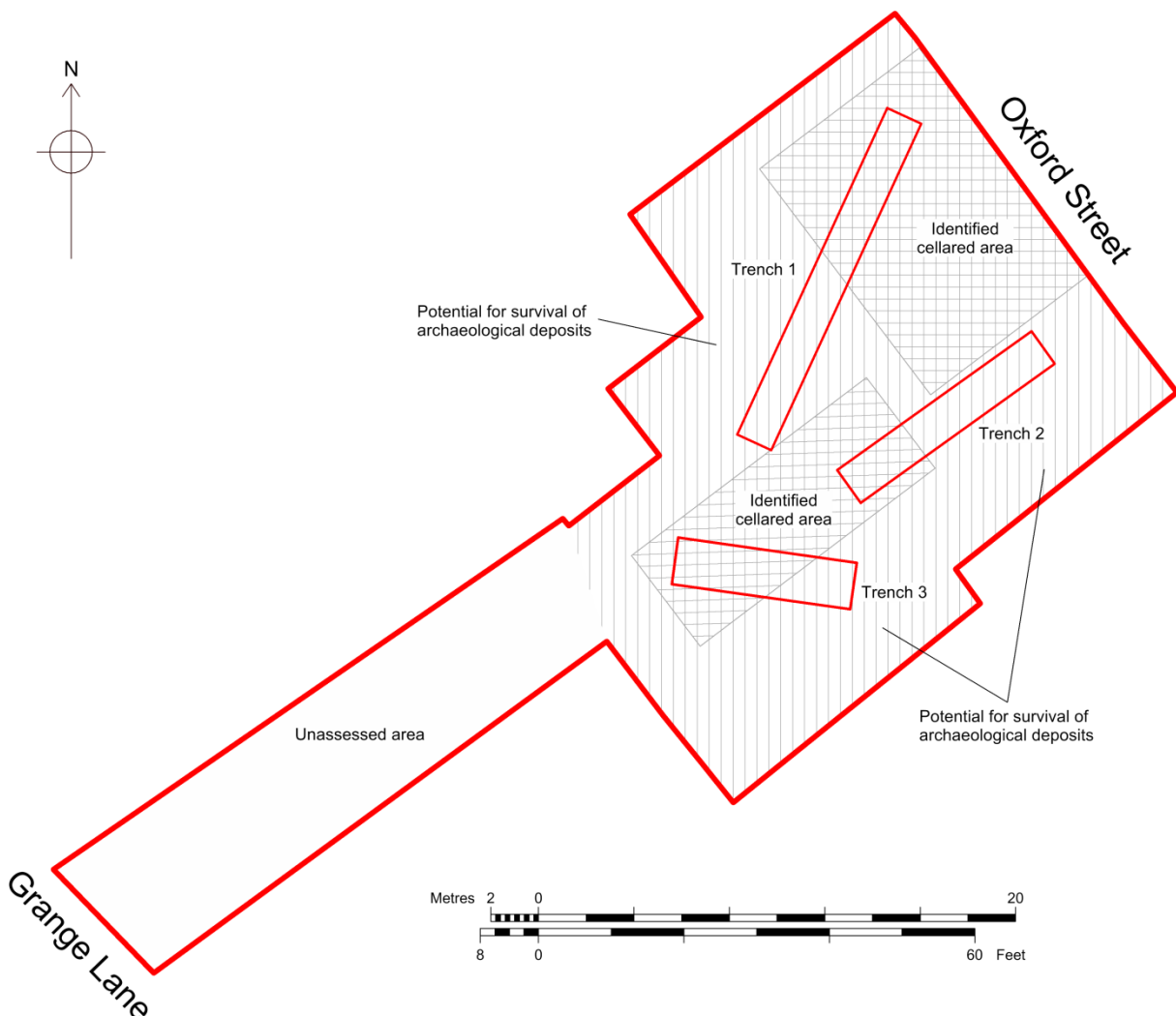


Figure 11: Plan of project area, showing trench locations and areas of potential archaeological survival.

Much of the eastern half of the site had suffered extensive damage from modern building foundations, cellars and service trenches (Figure 11). The cellars in particular had likely destroyed all but the very deepest intrusive archaeology (i.e. pits, ditches etc.) within their footprint for they were all found to have been dug over a meter into the natural substratum. The entire Oxford Street frontage, except for a c.6m section at its southern end,

appeared to be deeply cellared. However, islands of stratified archaeological deposits did appear to survive along the site's peripheries and beneath uncellared buildings and yard areas in the centre of the site.

The western half of the site, fronting onto Grange Lane, remains uncharacterised.

## Archive

The site archive consists of a site indices (comprising 1 A4 Context Summary sheet, 1 A4 Drawing Index sheet, 1 A4 Drawing Record sheet, 1 A4 Photo Record sheet and 1 A4 EDM Survey Notes sheet); 2 A3 Permatrace plan sheets (containing 9 drawings); 3 A4 Trench record sheets; 7 A5 Context record sheets; 15 digital photographs and 12 monochrome photographs. Finds include 23 sherds of Roman pottery, 5 sherds of medieval pottery, 1 fragment of Roman tile 395g of hearth lining & slag, and 43 fragments of bone. The archive will be held by Leicester City Museums under the accession number A3.2014.

## Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) at the University of York (see Table 4).

Table 4: Summary of OASIS information

<b>Project OASIS no.</b>	universi1-173881
<b>Project Name</b>	55 Oxford Street, Leicester
<b>Project Type</b>	Archaeological evaluation (trial trenching)
<b>Project Manager</b>	Richard Buckley
<b>Project Supervisor</b>	Mathew Morris
<b>Previous/Future work</b>	None/Unknown
<b>Current Land Use</b>	Vacant ground
<b>Development Type</b>	Residential
<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF
<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Planning condition
<b>Site Co-ordinates</b>	SK 5856 0393
<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	19/02/14 – 21/02/14
<b>Archive Recipient</b>	Leicester City Museums
<b>Study Area</b>	c.588 sq. m

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal, the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, in due course.

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