



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

Archaeological work during
groundworks adjacent to
Westbrook House, Great Easton,
Leicestershire

SP 84773 92902

Jon Coward



ULAS Report No 2014-005
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**Archaeological work during groundworks adjacent to
Westbrook House, Great Easton, Leicestershire**

SP 84773 92902

For

Mr. L.Parker

Planning Application Number 08/00758/FUL

Checked by Project Manager

Signed:



Date: 6th January 2014

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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by Mr L. Parker to carry out archaeological work (strip, map and sample excavation) on land at Westbrook House, Great Easton, Leicestershire, in advance of a house development. The work was carried out in December 2013. Apart from several modern features the work revealed one small medieval pit contained two adjoining sherds of pottery dating from between c.1100 and 1400. The archive will be deposited with LMARS under accession code X.A.200.2013 in due course.

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by Mr L. Parker to carry out archaeological work (strip, map and sample excavation) on land at Westbrook House, Great Easton, Leicestershire, in advance of a house development. The work was carried out following advice from the Historic and Natural Environment Team, Environment and Heritage Services Department, Leicestershire County Council, as advisors to the planning authority.

The archaeological work was in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12, paragraph 128 and Appendix 2.

2. Location and Geology

The site lies west of Brook Lane in the southern part of the village and is currently under pasture (Figs 1-2). The geology comprises mudstone (Charmouth Mudstone Formation), overlain with sand and gravel River Terrace Deposits (British Geological Survey of Britain).

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application site lies in an area of archaeological interest. Situated within the historic settlement core of Great Easton, the application site is close to known archaeological remains. Archaeological evaluation and subsequent recording on an adjacent site has revealed evidence of the medieval open fields system, and indicated Saxon activity nearby (MLE 15949). Further Saxo-Norman and medieval pottery has been found during road widening in Great Easton (MLE 8158) and Roman material has also been recovered from the village (MLE 16782).

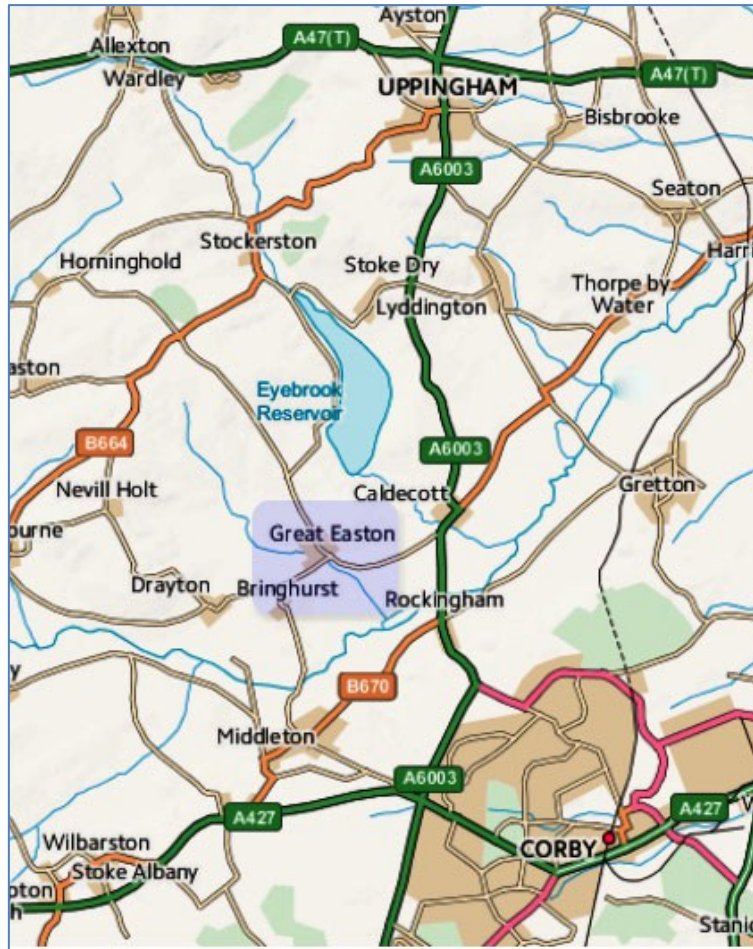


Figure 1 Great Easton (shaded)
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2013



Figure 2 Position of site within village
NTS. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2013

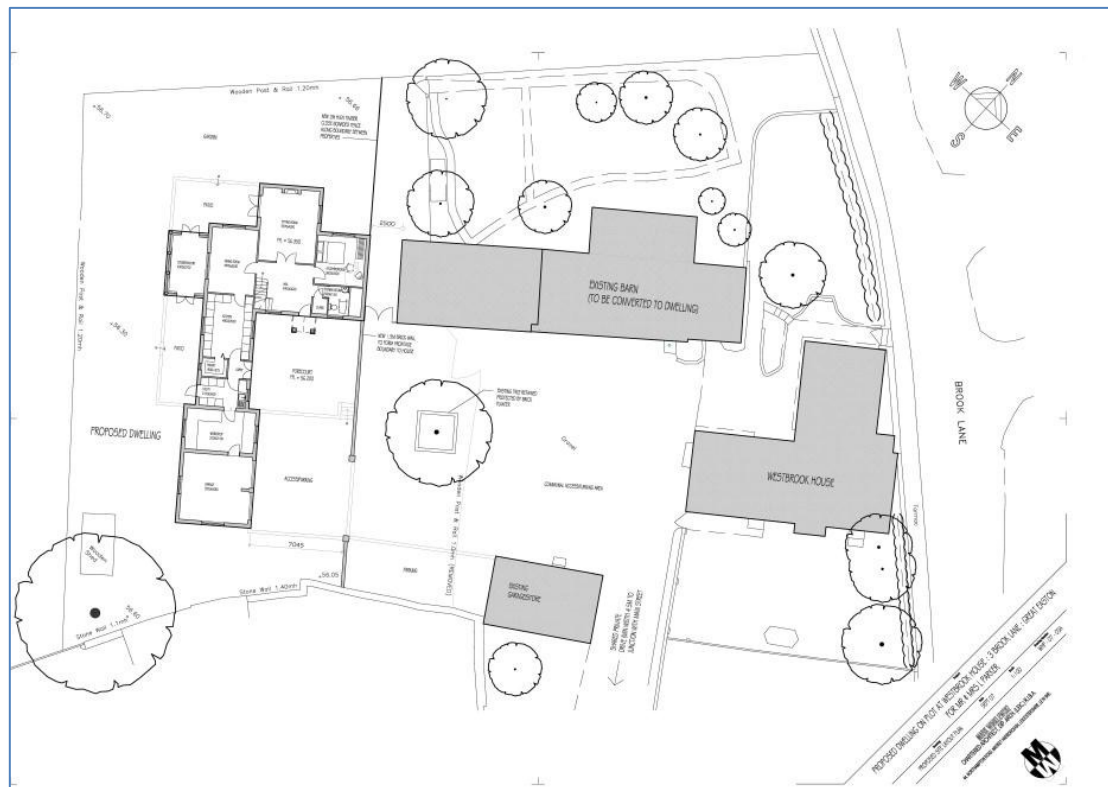


Figure 3 Proposed new dwelling in relation to extant buildings.
NTS Plan provided by developer

4. Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work 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 affected by the proposed ground works.
- To record any archaeological deposits affected by the ground works.
- To produce an archive and report any results.

5. Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2012) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008).

A Design Specification for Archaeological Work (Score 2013) was produced by ULAS prior to the archaeological work being undertaken.

The proposed application (08/00758/FUL) is for the erection of a dwelling on land to the rear of Westbrook House, Brook Lane, Great Easton, Leicestershire (Fig. 3). The work consisted of the stripping of the building footprint using a mechanical excavator with a flat bladed ditching bucket. The archaeological monitoring was carried out in December 2013.

6. Results

The topsoil comprised a medium grey clay loam, with stone fragments and frequent building rubble. No clear subsoil was present. The rubble increased in intensity towards the north-east, adjacent to the extant barn; it is clear that a farm building used to continue the line of the present barn, as a floor (or floor make-up) of medium-sized river-rounded cobbles mixed with Victorian bricks and brick fragments was still *in-situ* beneath the turf. This structure had slightly cut into the natural, which was *c.* 0.40m below present ground level (Fig. 5). Nearly all the natural exposed was a beige silty clay, with the exception of one small area of compacted river sand and gravel with ironpan and/or manganese, which underlay part of the *in-situ* floor make-up. This deposit sloped down to the west, overlain by the clay natural.

To the south-west, part of the building footprint coincided with a large tree stump, and a nearby tree restricted stripping; a large feature in this area proved on excavation to be a root bowl and it became clear that there was extensive root disturbance in the natural around this area (Fig. 5).

Apart from several modern pit-like features which contained china or Victorian or later brick, three features were found.



Figure 4 Pit cut 4, looking North

- **Posthole 2** was vertical sided, round, and measured 0.26m in diameter by 0.42m depth. It had very clean, regular sides and base; no finds were recovered from the fill. Although cut through clay, the base appeared to be hard gravel, almost certainly the same natural sand and gravel layer seen to the east, which was dropping downwards in this direction. The excavator considered this feature to be modern.
- **Pit 6** was rectangular with rounded corners, 0.65m by 0.45m, and 0.18m in depth, very regular sides and base, with a dark grey-brown clay silt fill, very similar to topsoil. No finds were recovered. This, too, was judged to be modern.

- Pit/posthole cut 4, fill 3** however was more plausibly a genuine archaeological feature (Fig. 4), having a leached greyish silty clay fill (3). It was sub circular in plan with bowled sides and base, 0.60m in diameter and 0.20m in depth. Two joining sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the fill (see pottery appendix). This feature seemed to be in isolation. The only other find of archaeological interest was a flint flake which was on the interface between the hard sand and gravel natural and the building footings above; it may have been *in situ*, or may have been imported onto the site along with the cobbles used for the make-up. Of note was the absence of any unstratified medieval or earlier pottery in the spoil.

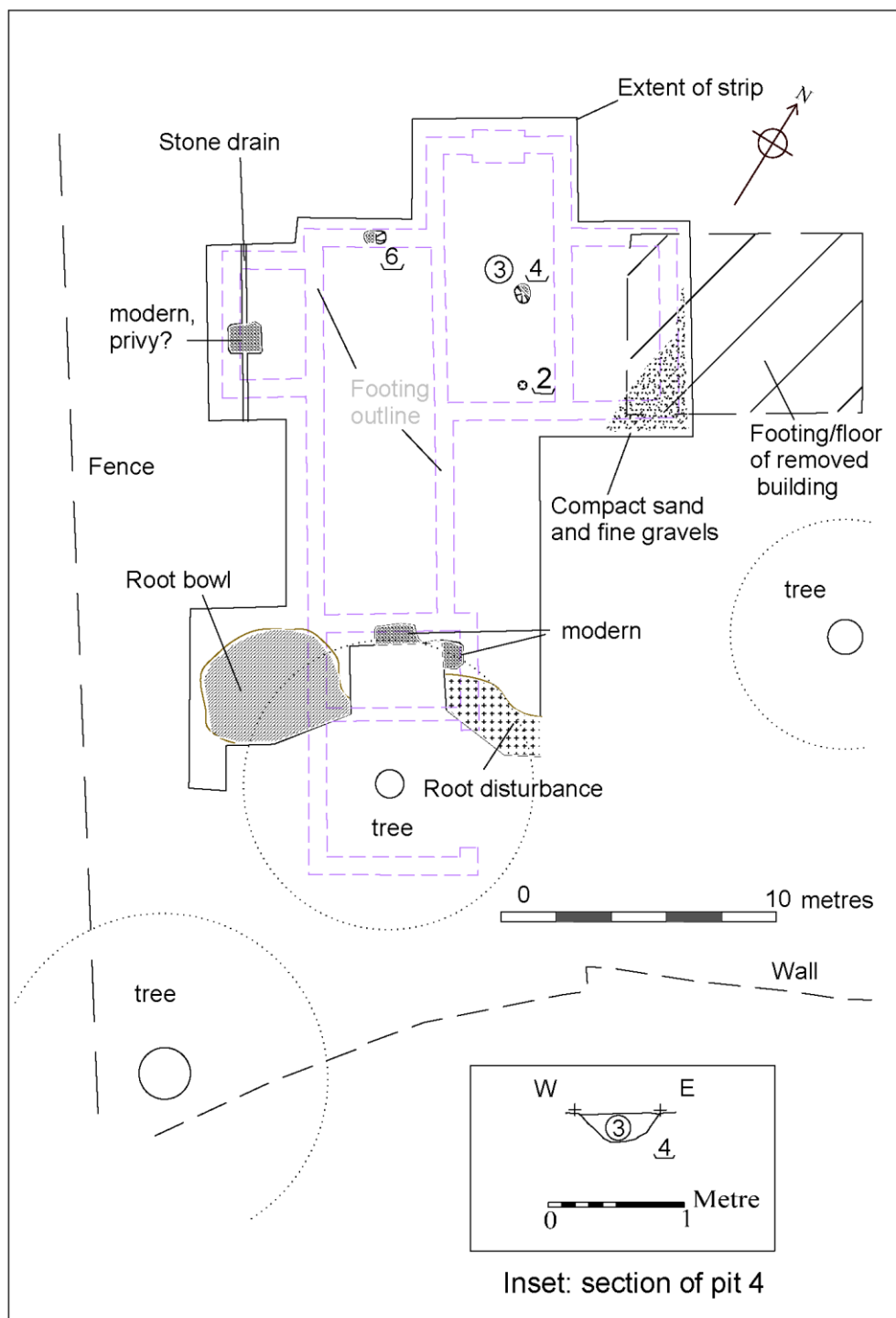


Figure 5 Features in plan and section (inset)



Figure 6 North part of the site under excavation, looking west



Figure 7 North part of site, looking north

7. Conclusion

The excavation at Westbrook House, Great Easton revealed one feature of antiquity together with several modern features, and natural disturbance caused by removed and *in-situ* trees and shrubs. The medieval pit attests to medieval activity in the vicinity, as might be expected in a village core setting. The site is situated some distance back from the present road frontages, although there may have been other lanes in use which have been lost. The lack of any other archaeological artefacts from the topsoil aside from a single flint flake indicates a low likelihood of the proposed dwelling being in the immediate vicinity of a settlement site.

8. Archive

The archive consists of

- Digital images
- Monochrome negatives and contact sheets
- 3 context sheets
- 1 sheet permagraph

9. Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Mr Lawrence and architect Mark Winklewski for their assistance during the course of the work. The Project was managed by Vicki Score and the work undertaken by Jon Coward and Andy Hyam.

10. Bibliography

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Appendix 1: Medieval Pottery

by Deborah Sawday

The pottery, two joining sherds from the base of a vessel of unknown type and weighing 7 grams, was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group, (MPRG 1998), (MPRG, 2001) and the ULAS fabric series (Sawday 2009). The sherds are an Oolitic ware, (fabric OL) with a grey core and outer surface and pale buff interior and may be a product of kilns in South Lincolnshire (Young 2005) or Stanion Lyveden in North Northamptonshire, with a general date range of c.1100 to c.1400.

Appendix 2: OASIS Information

Project Name	Westbrook House, Great Easton
Project Type	Strip, plan and sample excavation
Project Manager	Vicki Score
Project Supervisor	Jon Coward
Previous/Future work	No
Current Land Use	Pasture
Development Type	Domestic
Reason for Investigation	NPPF Section 12
Position in the Planning Process	Condition
Site Co ordinates	SP 84773 92902
Start/end dates of field work	December 2013
Archive Recipient	LMARS
Height min/max	56m – 57m OD
Study Area	0.66 hectares
Finds	Flint, medieval pottery

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