



**University of  
Leicester**

**Archaeological Services**



**An Archaeological field evaluation at  
Riverside Farm, Sysonby, Melton  
Mowbray, Leics.**

Wayne Jarvis

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**An Archaeological field evaluation at  
Riverside Farm, Sysonby, Melton Mowbray, Leics.**

**Wayne Jarvis**

*for*

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**An Archaeological field evaluation at  
Riverside Farm, Sysonby, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire  
(SK 738 189)**

Wayne Jarvis

**Summary**

*An archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land at Riverside Farm, Sysonby, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (SK 738 189). The work was in advance of the proposed development of the site for new housing. Three trenches were excavated targeting the proposed building plots. A fourth area was recorded where groundworks had reached suitable levels. A few features were identified, including a stone wall-footing, yard surfaces and an unusual bone lined drain. These features all produced evidence suggesting activity of late 18th or 19th century date.*

*The archive for this work will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums Service with accession number XA91 2014.*

**Introduction**

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Edren Homes Ltd. to carry out an archaeological field evaluation on land at Riverside Farm, Sysonby, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (SK 738 189). This archaeological work is in accordance with NPPF Section 12: Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment.

The site lies east of Sysonby Grange Lane and adjacent to the churchyard. Residential development is proposed on the site.

**Site Location, Details and Geology**

The site lies east of Sysonby Grange Lane and adjacent to the churchyard. Residential development is proposed on the site, incorporating housing, garaging and access roads (P.A. 08/00388/FUL & 08/00389/LBC). It comprises a range of farm buildings, and new development. The site slopes north-west to south-east with the River Eye forming the eastern boundary, and the site covers an area of c.0.75ha.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the underlying geology of the application area is likely to consist of Lias Mudstone, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 190 to 204 million years ago in the Jurassic and Triassic Periods, indicating a local environment previously dominated by shallow seas. The superficial deposits are river deposited alluvium and Quaternary Head and river gravels (Bytham channel) <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (accessed 15th July 2014).

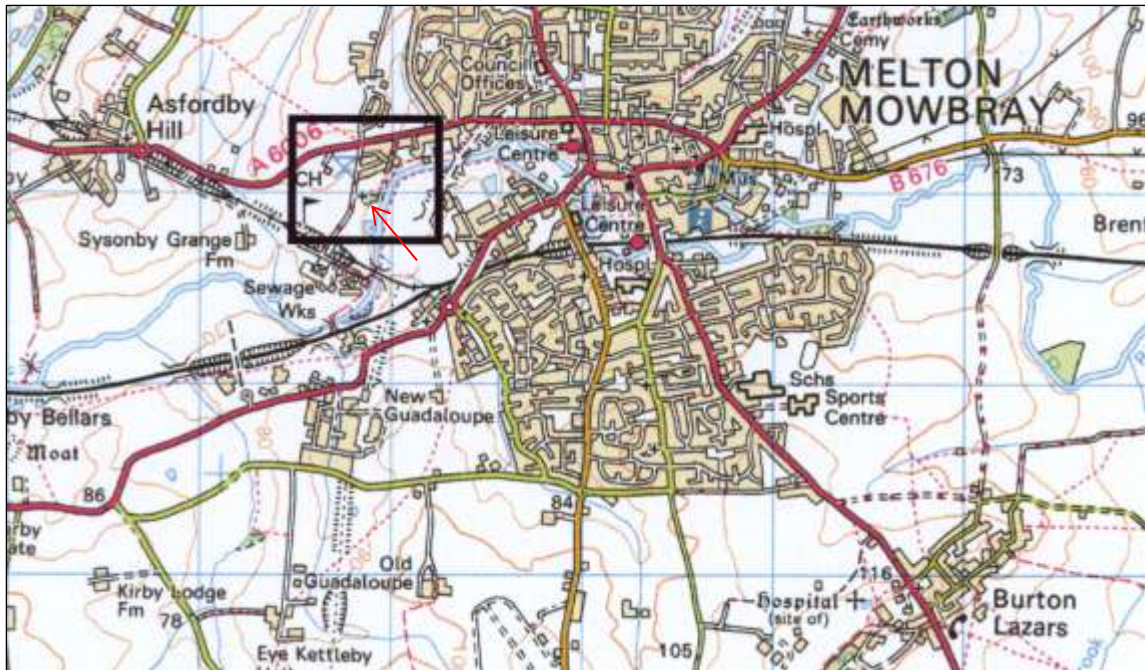


Figure 1: Location Map. Location of site indicated.

1:50 000 (Landranger) ©Crown Copyright. Licence No. 100021186.

## Historical and Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment and rapid buildings appraisal has been undertaken for the area (Richards 2008). This indicated that there were six surviving agricultural buildings, three of which were of historic significance including a late 18th century threshing barn (*ibid.*, Building 11) which is to be converted. This has been subject to a detailed building survey (Clarke 2014).

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record indicates that the proposed development lies in a rich archaeological landscape, with extensive medieval and post-medieval remains and close to remains from the Neolithic period through to the Romano British period and possible Anglo Saxon funerary activity. There is therefore moderate to high potential for archaeological remains of all periods to be present within the application area.

## Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation 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 ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

## Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2010) in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2010). The archaeological work followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological work* (WSI) prepared by ULAS.

The WSI asked for a c. 5% sample of the c. 0.5ha. area necessitating the equivalent of six 20m by 1.8m trenches (c. 300 sq. m.). The provisional trench plan attached (Fig. 2) shows the proposed WSI location of the trenches targeting the proposed house footprints, and the proposed new road line. Due to constraints observed on a site visit on 09/06/2014 (S. Clarke pers. comm.) the trenches had to be shortened significantly so two further trenches were to be added on the access road (Fig. 2, Trenches 2 and 4).



Figure 2: Client plan showing site location, proposed development and WSI trench layout.

## Results (Table 1)

The trench layout had to be varied further when site works took place (Fig. 3). None of the access road areas were accessible as the road had been constructed. Trench 6 could not be excavated as this was the builders' compound and access area. The garage area for plot 3 (Trench 3) had also already been stripped and the foundation trenches already excavated. As no further groundworks would take place here, the area was instead examined including the foundation trench sections (and referred to here still as 'Trench 3'). Trenches 5, 7 and 8 were excavated but at different orientations and lengths due to a series of site constraints (Table 1, Plate 1). The trenches were excavated by a JCB type excavator machine with a back actor and ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. After excavation and recording the trenches were backfilled.

The site has clearly been stripped and material brought in for levelling at various times in the recent past. Topsoil where visible consisted of a very dark grey sandy clay with very rare rounded gravels. In some areas this was mixed in with modern levelling and overburden. The depth of this covered measured between 0.25m and 0.6m in depth (Table 1). The subsoil cover where present consisted of a slightly reddy brown clayey sand with sometimes rare gravel. This was between 0.1m and 0.35m deep. Under this lay a variable natural sub-stratum, consisting of alluvial deposits (grey clay, sand and gravel) and a reddy brown clayey sand.

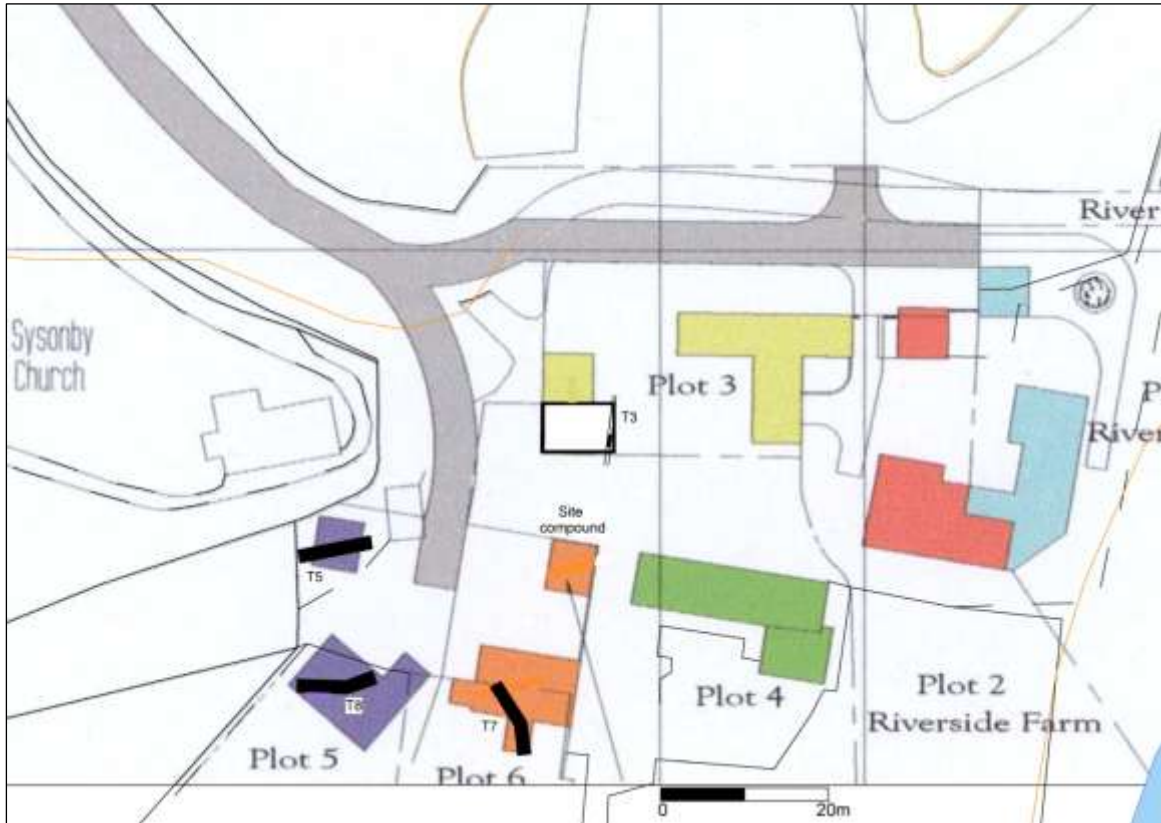


Figure 3: Client plan, proposed development and amended trench layout.



Plate 1: Site area, looking north-east from Plot 5.

**Table 1: Trench Results**

Trench No.	Length m (x1.8m width)	Depth to features (min, m)	Depth to natural (min, m)	Depth of topsoil/ Overburden (min, m)	Orientation (approx.)	Notes (Contexts etc.). Cut numbers in square brackets; fills in round brackets
3	10m x 7.5m*	0.25	0.96	0.25	Longer axis E-W	*area stripped. Footings already. Dug. Context (1) stone wall
5	8.8	0.4	0.4	0.4	E-W	[4] (3) bone-lined drain
7	9.5	0.55	0.55	0.55	N-S then NW-SE	(2) yard surface
8	9.5	---	0.7	0.6	E-W then NE-SW	Modern intrusions only

***Trench 3***

Figs. 3-4, Plates 2-4, Context (1)

This area was for a garage (for Plot 3). The original plan had been altered from a double garage with a long axis north-south, to two separate single garages, one of which had already been constructed to the north. The south garage had a longer axis running east-west and measuring 10m east-west by 7.5m north-south. The area had been stripped of overburden, and the foundation trenches had been excavated to a depth of c.0.8m and with a width of 0.6m. Cleaning and examination of these areas identified a yard surface associated with a stone wall to the east. The stone wall context (1) ran north-south, and



the wall-line was exposed for 2.48m, Plates 2-4. Beyond this the wall was cut by the footings and service trenches, but stones in the south foundation trench on the same line probably indicate it continued southwards further. The wall was 0.44m wide and 0.47m deep. The build was of unmortared rough sandstone blocks, with a rubble core. Occasional fragments of brick were identified within the build of the wall and the yard surface to the west, with the latter also producing window glass. The alignment of the wall matches that of the earlier buildings to the east, being of a late 18th early 19th century date (Clarke 2014), and the stonework is presumably the foundation for a demolished further building. No further features were present within the area of the garage.

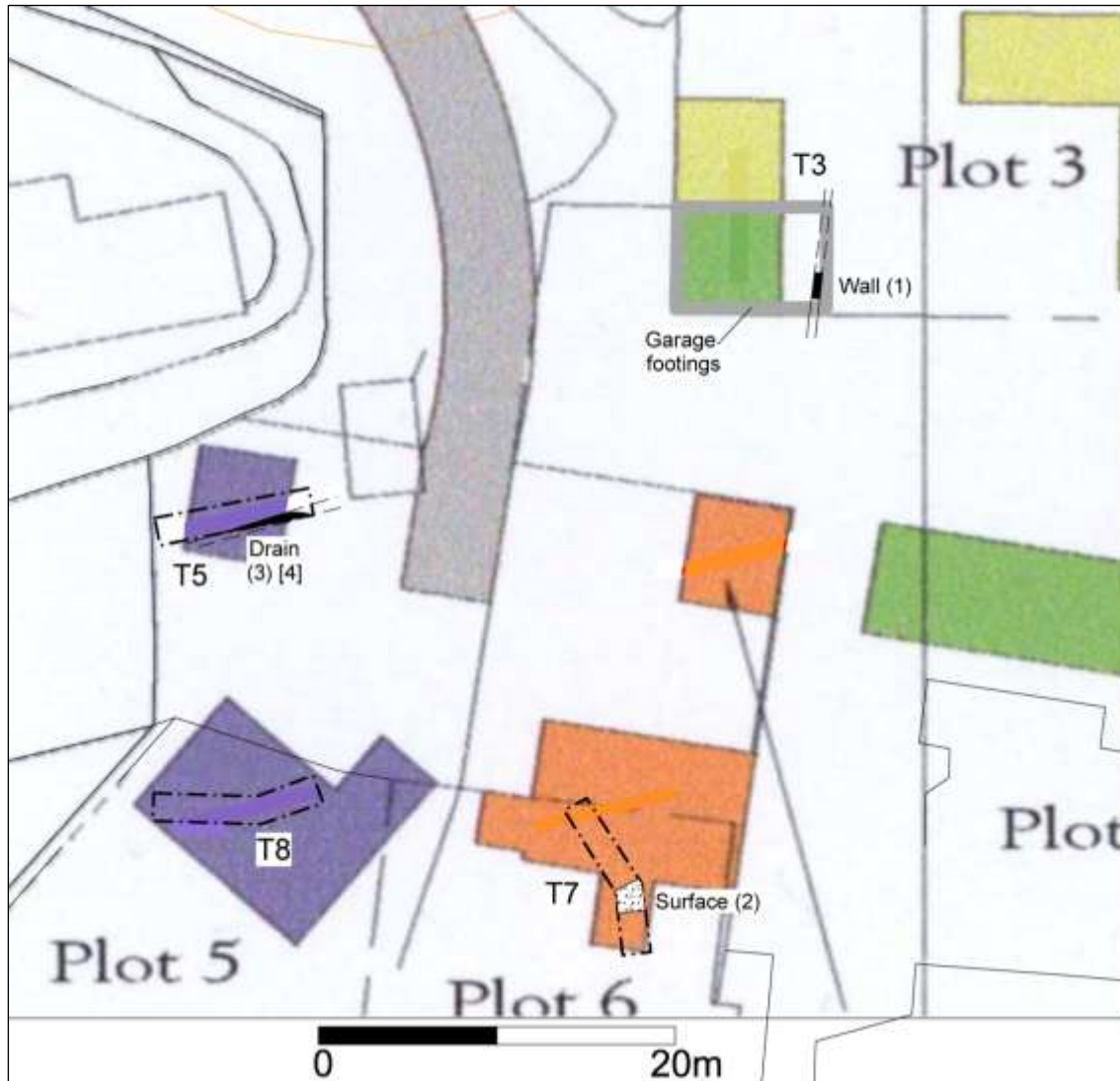


Figure 4: Trenches; and features identified during evaluation work.



Plate 2: Wall line (1) and yard surface to west, in east of garage Plot/Trench 3



Plate 3: Wall line (1) and yard surface, in east of garage Plot/Trench 3



Plate 4: Wall line (1) and yard surface beyond, in east of garage Plot/Trench 3

### ***Trench 5***

Figs. 3-4, Plates 5-6, Contexts (3) [4]

This trench was sited within the footprint of the proposed garage block for Plot 5, in the south-west of the site area. The area was quite disturbed with a large modern pit cutting in the middle area, and the overburden incorporating a large amount of modern demolition material. Below overburden levels (0.40-0.45m depth) a 5m long east-west drain was recorded [4]. This was over 0.4m wide (south edge not seen) and 0.2m deep. The drain was lined with large animal bones, occasional stone and other building materials (3). A fragment of brick was recovered from this, providing a *terminus post quem* (TPQ) of a late 18th century or later date. No other features were exposed in Trench 5.



Plate 5: Bone lined drain (3) [4] in garage Plot/Trench 5



Plate 6: Bone lined drain (3) [4] in garage Plot/Trench 5

### ***Trench 7***

Figs. 3-4, Plate 7, Context (2)

Trench 7 was sited within the footprint of house Plot 6, inside a standing modern barn hence the trench had to be dog-legged for machine access. Up to 0.6m of overburden (floor make ups) was removed to expose topsoil below. The topsoil was 0.25m deep and straight on to natural alluvial deposits over most of the trench area. From 2.5m to 3.5m north of the trench south end was a pocket of metallised surfacing below the topsoil, measuring 1.6m across and with a depth of .08m. Within the rounded cobbles were occasional fragments of limestone and a fragment of brick indicating an 18th-19th century date. After recording the surface was removed exposing only sterile grey clay.



Plate 7: Yard surface (2) Plot 6 footprint, Trench 7

### ***Trench 8***

Figs. 3-4, Plate 8

This was sited within the footprint of the Plot 5 house. This also had to be dog-legged for access purposes. Overburden consisting of modern levels and topsoil was removed to a depth of 0.6-0.65m. Below this a subsoil between 0.1-0.35m was observed. This was disturbed and produced occasional modern material. Below this, the natural substratum was a reddy brown sandy clay, which had several areas of disturbance all of which produced modern material. No further features were observed and no finds were recovered.



Plate 8: Trench 8, house Plot 5

## **Conclusion**

Several features were identified during the evaluation, with dating evidence indicating activity of an 18th-19th century date. These features comprise a line of north-south wall-foundation and associated yard surface, further yard surfacing, and an east-west bone-lined drain. No further features were observed and no other artefacts were recovered.

## **Acknowledgements**

ULAS would like to thank Edren Homes Ltd. for their co-operation with this project. The project was monitored on behalf of the Planning Authority by Richard Clark. The project was managed by Patrick Clay and the fieldwork was carried out by the author with assistance from Scott Lomax also of ULAS. I am also grateful to Deborah Sawday and Sophie Clarke of ULAS for the finds work.

## Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

### *OASIS data entry*

Project Name	Riverside Farm, Sysonby
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	P. Clay
Project Supervisor	W Jarvis
Previous/Future work	Evaluation
Current Land Use	Farmyard
Development Type	New Housing
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Requirement
Site Co ordinates	SK 738 189
Start/end dates of field work	17-18/06/2014
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire C.C. Museums Service
Study Area	0.5ha

## Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums Service with accession number XA91 2014.

The building materials were discarded after analysis. The documentary archive consists of the following:

4 Trench recording sheets

1 Photo Record sheet. Other site indices (1 context index sheet, 3 A5 context sheets)

1 Unbound copy of this report

1 Contact sheet of digital photographs

1 CD digital photographs

1 Set B&W contact sheets

1 Set B&W negatives

## APPENDICES

### Context Index

Context	Cut	Area	Description
1	---	T3	Stone wall, & assoc'd surface. Brick recovered & discarded
2	---	T7	Yard surface. Brick recovered & discarded
3	4	T5	E-W Drain, bone lined. Brick recovered & discarded
4	4	T5	Cut for drain



## The Post-Roman Ceramic Building Material By Deborah Sawday

The bricks have been catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series (Sawday 2009). The results are shown below (Table 2).

Table 2: The ceramic building material, by fabric, number and weight (grams) by context.

context	Fabric/ware	No	Gr	comments
2 yard surface	EA - Earthenware	1	131	Red bodied, sanded surfaces, with rare white clay (marl) and rock inclusions; fragment only with no dimensions available. ?18th or 19th century in date.
3 [4] drain	EA - Earthenware	1	550	Possibly hand-made with roughly mixed red & white clays with patches of reduction and sanded surfaces. Fragment only with no dimensions. available. Inclusions - predominantly lumps of white marl, some quartz and iron ore also present. Possibly 18th century in date.

Site/ Parish: Sysonby, Melton Mowbray Accession No.: XA91 2014 Document Ref: sysonby1.docx Material: brick Site Type: adjacent to post medieval church in hamlet.	Submitter: W. Jarvis Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Identification: 3.07.2014 Method of Recovery: evaluation Job Number: 14-631
---	--

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- Clarke, S., 2014, *A Level 3 Historic Building Survey of the barn at Riverside Farm, Sysonby, Melton Mowbray, Leics.* ULAS Report No. 2014-111.
- Richards, G., 2008, *An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment and Rapid Building Appraisal for Proposed Redevelopment at Riverside Farm, Sysonby, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.* ULAS Report No. 2008-129.
- Sawday, D., 2009, 'The medieval and post-medieval pottery and tile' in J. Coward and G. Speed, *Urban Life in Leicester: An Archaeological Excavation at Freeschool Lane.* Vol 2 *Specialist Reports.* ULAS Report No.2009-140 ,v2, 36-182.

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