



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An Archaeological evaluation at
7, Britannia Street, Shepshed,
Leicestershire.

NGR: SK 47876 19758



John Thomas

ULAS Report No. 2014-086
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**An archaeological
Evaluation at
7, Britannia Street, Shepshed,
Leicestershire**

NGR: SK 47876 19758

John Thomas

For: Graham Smith / Architects LE1.

Approved by:

Signed: ..



Date: ...08.05.2014

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An Archaeological Evaluation at 7, Britannia Street, Shepshed, Leicestershire. NGR: SK 47876 19758.

John Thomas

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land at 7, Britannia Street, Shepshed, Leicestershire by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 30th of April and the 1st of May 2014. Three trial trenches were excavated in response to proposals for residential development on the site.

The site lies in the historic settlement core of Shepshed and contains the demolished remains of a Medieval hall house. The building was demolished in 1971 following a fire at the property and it was unclear how much of the original structure, and evidence for its occupation, remained.

The evaluation has shown that there is high potential that evidence relating to the Medieval occupation of the building survives. Remarkably it appears that very little was removed from the site following demolition and the latest floor plan and upstanding lower walls of the building have survived intact beneath layers of rubble.

Sample excavation beneath the latest (c.19th/20th century) floor tiles revealed a thick layer of mixed soil containing evidence for occupation. The upper levels of this layer contained possible hearth settings, post holes and charcoal suggesting that the soil deposit was partly derived from beaten earth floor layers within the building. The relatively substantial depth of the layer may also suggest that it formed part of the artificial platform on which the building was constructed.

Trenching to the rear of the building revealed surviving backyard surfaces and a brick-lined well, probably of 18th/19th- century date, but potentially sealing earlier occupation layers. Two trenches in the garden area of the plot revealed an undated cobbled surface overlain by garden soils that could potentially be of medieval origin. An assemblage of late medieval and early post medieval pottery dating between the 15th and 17th centuries was recovered from these trenches, reflecting domestic activity relating to the buildings occupation.

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under Accession Number X.A64.2014.

Background

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, this document presents the results of an archaeological field evaluation (AFE) on land at 7, Britannia Street, Shepshed, Leicestershire (Figure 1). The evaluation was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services in response to proposals for residential development on the land.

The assessment area is located at the northern end of Britannia street, close to the junction with Belton Street, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SK 47876 19758. The property comprises a roughly rectangular plot measuring approximately 375m² (0.0375ha)

(Figure 2). It lies at a height of approximately 66m AOD and is a generally flat area of land that has been raised up around 1.5m from the present road level.

Shepshed is located in the Charnwood Borough of Leicestershire, approximately 15 miles north-west of Leicester and 5 miles west of Loughborough. A Desk-based Assessment, also undertaken by ULAS, highlighted the archaeological potential of the site (Clarke 2014). The report's main findings were that the development area is situated in the historic settlement core of Shepshed and is the site of a Medieval hall house that was surveyed in 1969 (Rickman 1973), prior to the building catching fire and being demolished in 1971. The site presently contains the visible upstanding remains of the former house and has been undisturbed since demolition took place.

Because of the archaeological potential of the site, in particular the presence of upstanding building remains, Charnwood Borough Council recommended a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching. The evaluation was designed to assess the impact of development proposals on the surviving building remains and any other buried deposits that were associated with it.

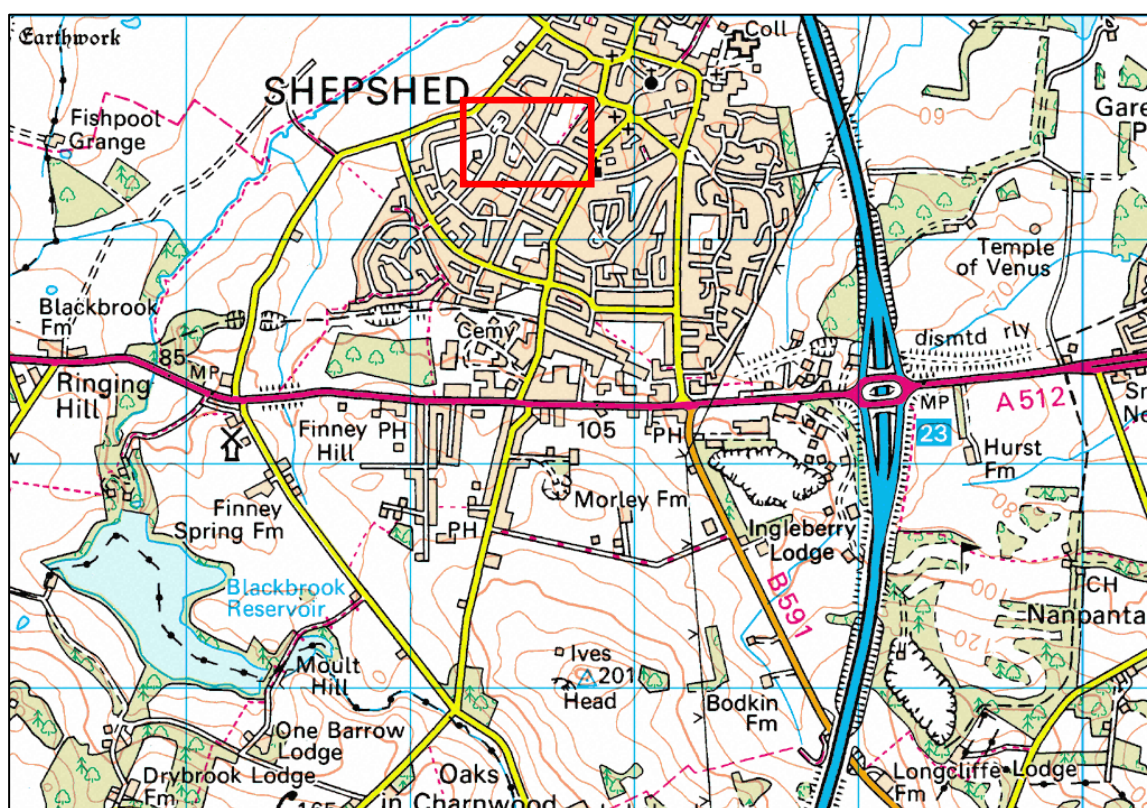


Figure 1: Site Location

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Research Aims

All mitigation work will be considered in light of the East Midlands Research Framework (Cooper ed. 2006) and strategy (Knight *et al.* 2012), along with targeting national research aims.

The evaluation will result in evidence for the previous building that would be affected by the proposed development scheme. Investigation into the origins and development of towns, industrial activity and standards of living are identified as priorities in the research agenda.

The evaluation and any future work has the potential to contribute to Research Agenda topics 7.1.2, 7.1.4, 7.2.1-7.2.4, 7.3.1-7.3.5, 7.5.4, 7.6.1-2, 7.7.1-7.7.5 and Research Objective 7E - *Investigate the morphology of rural settlements*; Research Objective 7F - *Investigate development, structure and landholdings of manorial estate centres*.

The building recording could contribute towards the questions in section 8.4 of the Updated Research Agenda – *Rural Settlement patterns and building traditions* and contribute to Research Objectives 8C – *Establish a typology of regional building traditions*, 8D – *Investigate developments in estate and garden design And their landscape contexts* and 8F – *Research the development of Industry and its impact upon landscape and settlement morphology*.

Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2010).

As indicated by the WSI a sample of the proposed development area was investigated by trial trenching. Trenching equivalent to c.30m x 1.6m was suggested, to include the former building footprint and some of its backyards and garden.

Topsoil and subsoil was removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All spoil heaps were inspected for unstratified archaeological material. All trenches were excavated to a width of 1.6m and down to the top of archaeological deposits or the natural substratum in the absence of any archaeological deposits. After recording, the trenches were backfilled and levelled.

Trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located were planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

Each trench was recorded on a standard ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheet noting soil depths and descriptions. One longitudinal face and the base of each trench was recorded in this way. Trench locations were recorded and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

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

Results

A total of three trial trenches were excavated during the evaluation (Figure 3). They were laid out to provide the best possible coverage of the application site, to sample areas within and to the rear of the building and to coincide with areas of potential disturbance from the development proposals.

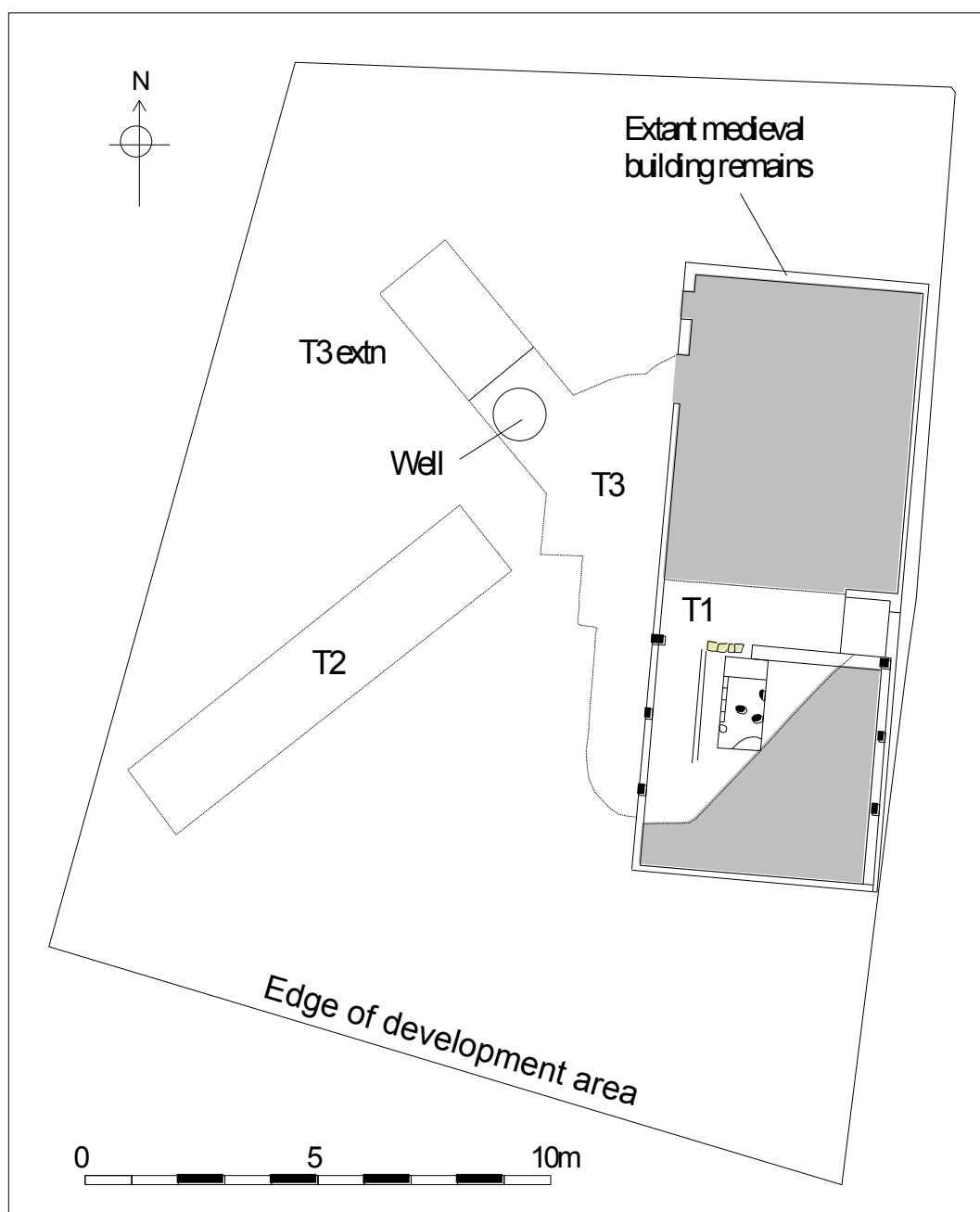


Figure 3 Trench Location plan – grey areas within building unexcavated (adapted from mapping supplied by Architects LE1).

Trench 1 (Figure 4)

Trench 1 was a roughly triangular area measuring $c.15\text{m}^2$ located within the footprint of the former building. Only the demolition material, consisting largely of loose brick and tile rubble, was removed from this area to reveal the tiled floor surface of the building which remained *in situ*. The trench partially exposed two rooms, corresponding with the central and

northern bay of the original medieval hall house. Both rooms were floored with square ceramic floor tiles of probable late 18th – early 19th century date (100). The two rooms were separated by low stone wall footings aligned east-west.

A sondage measuring *c.*1m x 2m was excavated below the tiles in the southern half of the trench (Figure 5). This revealed a *c.*0.06m deep bedding layer of sand (101) for the tiles, and beneath this was a compact layer of mixed dark greyish brown sandy clay (102). A test slot excavated through this deposit showed that it was approximately 0.60m deep and overlay a deposit of compacted gravel/cobbles (103). The upper surface of (102) contained charcoal flecks and more substantial occupation remains including several shallow circular depressions, possibly remains of post holes. At the southern edge of the sondage a compact area of mortar and burning was located, and a squared area of mortar bedding for floor tiles *c.*0.24m wide protruded from the western edge. Both of these areas may relate to former hearths within earlier phases of the building.

The rear wall of the building was also partially exposed and proved to survive to a height of *c.*0.30m consisting of a double skin of brick with stone rubble infill. The bricks used in the wall construction and also found in the demolition rubble, measured 9 inches long x 4½ inches wide by 2¼ inches thick and probably of early to mid-18th century date. A narrower type of brick, measuring 9 inches long x 3¼ inches wide x 2 inches thick was also found in the demolition rubble but not seen as part of the exposed wall construction.



Figure 4 Trench 1 viewed from the north.



Figure 5 The test slot through the floor: upper levels with occupation evidence (left) and deeper excavation through soil deposit (right).

Trench 2 (Figure 6)

Trench 2 was situated towards the rear of the development area lay on a north-east to south-west alignment, measuring *c.*9m x 1.6m wide. Natural subsoil consisting of mixed orange/pale yellow sandy clay was revealed at a depth of *c.*1.20m below the present ground level. Directly above this was an undated cobbled surface (206 - *c.*0.20m thick) consisting of small-medium rounded cobbles and occasional coarser stone fragments in a matrix of reddish orange clay. Overlying this was a greyish brown silty soil layer (205) containing fragments of late medieval and early post medieval pottery dating between the 15th-17th centuries. This layer also contained fragments of hand-made and moulded bricks including an example with glazing on three sides that may have formed part of a decorative element on the former building. Above this was a *c.*0.20m thick deposit of mortar-rich demolition material (204) and overlying this was a *c.*0.30m deep layer of greyish-brown garden/subsoil. A possible pit [203] may have cut through layers (204 & 205). Its single fill (202) was barely distinguishable from (205) but it clearly cut through the lighter demolition layer (204). Fragments of late and post medieval pottery were recovered from this feature. Finally a layer of dark greyish-brown topsoil (200 - *c.*0.30m thick) completed the sequence. The northern end of the trench had been disturbed by footings for a brick outhouse which is shown on the early maps for the site from the First Edition of 1884 (Clarke 2014, Fig. 6).



Figure 6 Trench 2 viewed from the south.

Trench 3 (Figure 7)

The third trench was located to evaluate the back yard area of the building and part of the garden. The main area of the trench covered an area of $c.20m^2$ and a short extension trench on a north-west to south-east alignment measured $c.3m \times 1.6m$.

As with Trench 1, only the demolition layer needed to be removed to reveal the *in situ* backyard surfaces which consisted of an arrangement of cobbled and roughly stoned areas divided by brick-built paths. At the northern end of the trench a partially backfilled and brick-lined well $c.1.20m$ in diameter was also revealed.

A short extension trench projected from the northern edge of Trench 3 on a north-west to south-east alignment into the garden area (Figure 8). This was excavated to the top of natural subsoil ($c.1m$ below current ground level) and revealed a similar sequence of layers to Trench 2. Directly overlying the natural subsoil was a $c.0.20m$ thick cobbled surface (304). This was overlain by a layer of light greyish-brown silty clay (303 – $c.0.12m$ thick), which was in turn covered by a layer of dark greyish-brown silty clay (302 – $c.0.18m$ thick). Layers of

subsoil and topsoil completed the sequence. Fragments of 17th century pottery were recovered from layer (303) and a mixed assemblage of post-medieval to modern pottery came from the topsoil layer (301).



Figure 7 Trench 3 viewed from the south east.



Figure 8 Trench 3 extension viewed from the south.

Discussion

The evaluation trenches were located across the application area in order to provide a reasonable coverage of the site and assess the potential for archaeological survival, particularly in relation to the building and its backyard/garden area.

In terms of the specific aims of the evaluation the trenching has shown that there is high potential for surviving evidence relating to the construction and use of the medieval hall house that once occupied the site.

After recording the upstanding hall house in 1969 Rickman (1973) suggested that it had been a house of some status, probably dating to the early 16th century, although his reasoning for this date is unclear. The building Rickman recorded had been much altered, with only two of the original three bays (those forming the open hall) of the building surviving. The southern bay (possibly the service bay) of the house was demolished, possibly in the 18th century (although dating for this event is unclear) and a new bay added to the northern end towards the end of the 19th century (Rickman 1973, 52-4).

Following demolition in 1971 the site of the building appears to have remained undisturbed and the evaluation proved that *in situ* floor surfaces of the latest occupation (probably 18th/19th century) survived below the rubble. The presence of these later floors suggested good potential for survival of earlier deposits and sample excavation beneath them revealed remains of probable beaten-earth floors containing occupation evidence.

Although difficult to interpret on a small scale, the presence of possible hearth remains and post holes indicates that potentially important evidence relating to earlier phases of the buildings use survive. A fuller view of these remains would provide an unusual opportunity to excavate the remains of a known timber framed medieval building and link the results to the record of the upstanding structure compiled by Rickman.

The survival of the central and northern bays of the house suggests that the missing southern bay and associated cross passage (unavailable to Rickman) may survive in plan form. This area of the site was unavailable for trenching due to restrictions on space but should survival be good, this area of the earliest building phase could provide important information on dates of construction, building techniques and function of this part of the house.

Evaluation to the rear of the house produced evidence for a laid yard surface and well immediately behind the building, with garden areas further west. Given the dating evidence recovered from the garden soil layers this arrangement seems likely to relate to the latest phases of the buildings occupation.

The cobbled surface revealed towards the bases of both Trenches 2 and 3 (extn.) indicates survival of deposits relating to earlier phases of occupation on the property and although presently undated, may be medieval in origin. No traces of refuse pits or deposits of medieval waste were encountered during the evaluation although given the restricted nature of the trench coverage, it is still possible that such deposits exist.

The overall results of the evaluation have revealed that significant and well-preserved remains of the medieval hall house survive and that there is high potential for survival of information relating to earlier construction phases and occupation of the building. There is also potential for archaeological survival within the backyard/garden area which have a thick build-up of overlying soil above an undated, but possibly medieval cobbled yard surface.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by the author and Sophie Clarke. The pottery and other artefacts were identified by Deborah Sawday. ULAS would like to thank Graham Smith for his co-operation and assistance during the work. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

Site Archive and Results

The archive consists of:

This report,

3 pro-forma trench recording sheets,

1x 35mm black and white negative film and corresponding contact sheet,

41 colour digital photographs,

Photographic record sheets,

1 box containing artefacts

1 compact disc of this report and the digital photographs.

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums under the accession number X.A64.2014. A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in an appropriate regional journal in due course. An OASIS record will also be produced and this report will be uploaded on to the Archaeology Data Service website.

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Appendix I: The Finds

Deborah Sawday

The Finds

The finds were listed by context and material and, where appropriate, by weight. The results are shown below (Tables 1 and 2).

The Pottery

The pottery, 54 sherds, weighing 1248 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 1989), (Sawday 2009).

Post medieval pottery dating from the 17th or 18th centuries if not slightly later occurred in context 303. Contexts 202, 205 and 301 all contained late medieval as well as post medieval and modern pottery, as well as finds in china clay and glass.

Table 1: The medieval and later pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams) in approximate chronological order.

Fabric	Common Name	Sherds	Weight	Average sherd weight	% of total by sherd no.
Medieval/Early Post medieval					
MP1	Midland Purple	3	213	71.00	
MP2	Midland Purple	1	26	26.00	
CW2/MB	Cistercian/Midland Black	1	14	14.00	
MY	Midland Yellow	2	46	13.00	
EA1	Earthenware 1	7	228	32.57	
Sub-Total		14	527	37.64	25.92
Post Medieval/Modern					
EA2	Earthenware 2	13	368		
EA3	Mottled ware	2	11		
EA5	Imitation Mottled ware	1	10		
EA6	Black ware	4	38		
EA7	Slipware	2	35		
EA8	Cream ware	1	14		
SW5	Brown Salt Glazed stoneware	1	31		
SW	Stoneware	7	79		
EA10	Fine White Earthenware	8	124		
PO	Porcelain	1	11		
Sub-Total		40	721	18.02	74.07
Total		54	1248		

The Miscellaneous Finds

The ceramic building material included fragments of two hand-made and moulded bricks in contexts 202 and 205. That from the latter context was glazed on the three surviving surfaces, and perhaps had formed part of a decorative element on the former building.

Another brick and a flat roof tile were both found in unstratified contexts. The roof tile has two nibs and is known as a 'Rosemary type' tile.

Conclusions

The presence of late medieval and/or early post medieval Midland Purple, Cistercian, Midland Black, Midland Yellow and the 'early' Earthenware EA1, is of note, given that this was formerly the site of a Medieval hall house. The large average sherd weight of this material indicates that the broken pottery was disposed of not far from where it was used and suggests that relatively undisturbed archaeological levels may survive in the vicinity.

The bricks are not closely dated (McWhirr 1997) but T.H. Rickman who surveyed the former structure on the site before it was demolished, suggested that this would have continued to have been a high status building in more recent times, in what was a wealthy market town. This may indicate that the bricks may be later 17th rather than possibly early 18th century in date, when the use of bricks became more common. The flat roof tile appears to have been made for last 175 years and is still in production.

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

Context	Fabric/ware	No	Grams	Comments
POT				
202	MP1 - Midland Purple 1	1	3	Hollow ware body, purple lead glaze internally, c. 1375/1400-1550.
202	SW5 – Brown Salt Glazed stoneware	1	31	Wheel turned glazed hollow ware base, Nottingham c.1750-1900.
202	EA2	1	15	Base, red bodied, slipped and lead glazed internally, post med/modern.
205	MP1	2	210	Hollow ware – joining sherds, possibly a jug, lead glaze externally/ transitional into EA1, 15 th – mid/late 16 th c.
205	CW2/MB – Cistercian ware/ Midland Black	1	14	Hollow ware, glazed on both surfaces, probably a cup or jug, c.1450 – 16 th C.
205	MY – Midland Yellow	1	27	Wide mouthed bowl or pancheon rim, c.1500 – 1700+.
205	MY	1	19	Wide mouthed bowl or pancheon rim, c.1500 – 1700+.
205	EA1– Earthenware 1	2	97	Internally glazed hollow ware jar body and base, join., 16 th – 17 th C.
205	EA1	3	61	Misc., internally glazed hollow ware body sherds.
205	EA1	1	38	Jar rim, externally ribbed.
205	EA2 – Earthenware 2	3	133	Coarse bodied internally glazed hollow ware body sherds, post med/modern.
205	EA2	1	16	Hollow ware, glazed externally ware, red bodied
205	EA2	1	24	Red bodied, jar rim, slipped & glazed internally
205	EA2	1	77	Red bodied, wide mouthed bowl/pancheon rim, slipped & glazed internally
205	EA6 – Black ware	3	16	Misc., glazed & fine bodied hollow ware, 17 th – 18 th C.
205	EA7 - Slipware	1	3	Press-moulded flat ware dish, buff bodied with embossed iron rich trailed slip decoration, firing yellow and brown under the transparent lead glaze. Later 17 th – early 18 th C.
205	EA7	1	32	Press-moulded flat ware dish, buff bodied with iron rich trailed and combed slip firing yellow and brown as above, 17 th C.
205	EA10 –Fine White Earthenware	1	91	Modern
205	SW - Stoneware	1	12	Modern
301	MP2 – Midland Purple 2	1	26	Jug neck & strap handle, abraded, 15 th – mid 16 th C.
301	EA6	1	22	Hollow ware base & body

				fragment, abraded, slipped & glazed internally, 17 th C.
301	EA8 – Cream ware	1	14	Later post med/mod
301	EA10	7	33	Modern
301	SW	6	67	Modern - bottle
301	PO - Porcelain	1	11	Modern
303	EA1	1	32	Jar/bottle base – 17 th C
303	EA2	4	37	Hollow ware, glazed externally ware, red bodied, 2 join.
303	EA2	2	66	Hollow ware, internally gazed, post med or possibly modern.
303	EA3 – Mottled ware	2	11	Cup fragments, glazed, c.1680+
303	EA5 – Imitation Mottled ware	1	10	Slipped & glazed cup body, C.1680+
Ceramic Building Material				
202	Earthenware	1	168	Moulded brick fragment, 18 th C.
205	Earthenware	1	456	Moulded brick fragment, green glazed on three surviving surfaces, c.54mm (2 1/8") thick, 18 th C.
U/S	Earthenware	1	2025	Moulded brick fragment, fettled upper surface, c.80 x 60 x 230mm. (3 1/8 x 2 3/8 x 9 1/8"), 18 th C.
U/S	Earthenware	1	1137	Flat roof tile with double nibs attached to smooth side of tile, which has knife cut edges, c.265 x 176mm. 'Rosemary type tile'. This type of tile appears to have been made for last 175 years.
MISC				
301	Glass	1		Embossed bottle fragment, modern
303	China Clay	2		Clay pipe stems, post med/modern
U/S	Slate	1		Estimated maximum dimensions c.245 x 115mm (9 5/8 x 4 1/2"). The tile is thin and machine cut, and is probably a modern Welsh slate.

Site/ Parish: 7 Britannia Street, Shepshed Accession No.: XA64 2014 Document Ref: shepshed1.do.x Material: pottery, cbm & misc. finds Site Type: site of former medieval hall house	Submitter: J. Thomas Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Identification: 9.05.2014 Method of Recovery: evaluation Job Number: 14-071
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Appendix II OASIS Information

OASIS INFORMATION	
Project Name	7, Britannia Street, Shepshed
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	R Buckley
Project Supervisor	J Thomas
Previous/Future work	DBA, unknown future work
Current Land Use	Unoccupied plot
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	Pre-determination evaluation
Position in the Planning Process	
Site Co ordinates	SK 47876 19758
Start/end dates of field work	30-4-14 – 1-5-14
Archive Recipient	LCCHNET
Study Area	0.03ha

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