

**An Archaeological Field Evaluation
At the rear of 30, Markfield Road,
Groby, Leicestershire
(SK 522 077)**

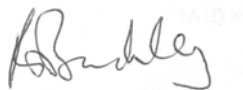
Leon Hunt

For

For Architects LE1

Checked by Project Manager

Signed: ..



.Date: 20/4/07

Name:R.J. Buckley.....

University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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An Archaeological Field Evaluation At the rear of 30, Markfield Road, Groby, Leicestershire (SK 522 077)

Leon Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out by ULAS on behalf of Architects LE1 on land adjacent to 30, Markfield Road, Groby, Leicestershire in advance a proposed residential development on the site. The site consisted of a field recently used as a tree plantation and the site of a dismantled mineral railway. Four trenches were placed across the site and revealed evidence that the railway cutting had been in-filled with clay to some depth. Trenches in the field revealed a large deposit of topsoil and modern demolition debris. No archaeological finds or features were discovered during the evaluation. The archive for the site will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services with accession number X.A59.2007

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Architects LE1 to carry out an archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching on land at to the rear of 30, Markfield Road, Groby, Leicestershire (NGR SK 522 077).

The site is approximately L-shaped and consists of two areas: an area that has been used recently as a plantation, and the site of a dismantled mineral railway. The site comprises an area of c.0.379ha within which it is proposed to construct nine one-bedroomed flats and eleven two-bedroomed flats, with associated car parking, access, services and landscaping.

This archaeological work forms part of the planning proposal for the site (Planning Application No. 06/01322/FUL) and follows on from the desk-based assessment prepared for the site by JSAC (JSAC 2003). This concluded that the application area had a low potential for buried archaeological remains.

The Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council considered that the archaeological potential may have been greater than that indicted by the DBA, particularly as the site is within the historic medieval core of the village and in the vicinity of a motte and bailey castle, which lies to the east of the site. For this reason, further assessment of the site was required through intrusive archaeological field evaluation.

In consequence the Planning Archaeologist, as archaeological adviser to the planning authority, detailed the need for an archaeological evaluation of the proposed development area in the *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation of Land at the Rear of 30, Markfield Road, Groby, Leicestershire* (hereinafter 'The Brief', Appendix 1). The work followed the *Design Specification for Archaeological Work* prepared by ULAS. (ULAS 07/164: see Appendix 2).

Site Location, Topography and Geology

The site lies to the rear of 30, Markfield Road, which lies on the northern side of the road, to the south of the A50 (Figure 1).

The main part of the site comprises an almost triangular piece of land that tapers to the west. It is bounded by buildings to the south, by allotments to the west and by a ditch and the A50 to the north. The eastern side of the site is open and adjacent to this lies a public footpath, which runs under the A50 to the fields to the north and leads south to the Markfield Road. The footpath is located on the western side of the site of a dismantled mineral railway, which once served the quarries in the area and ran underneath the present Markfield Road.

The site lies at a height of 99m OD at the Markfield Road frontage but the eastern part of the site rises up slightly, before falling to the north to run under the A50. The western part of the site behind the buildings is uneven and falls to the north and east.

The Ordnance Survey Geological survey of Great Britain, Sheet 155 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Mercia Mudstone.

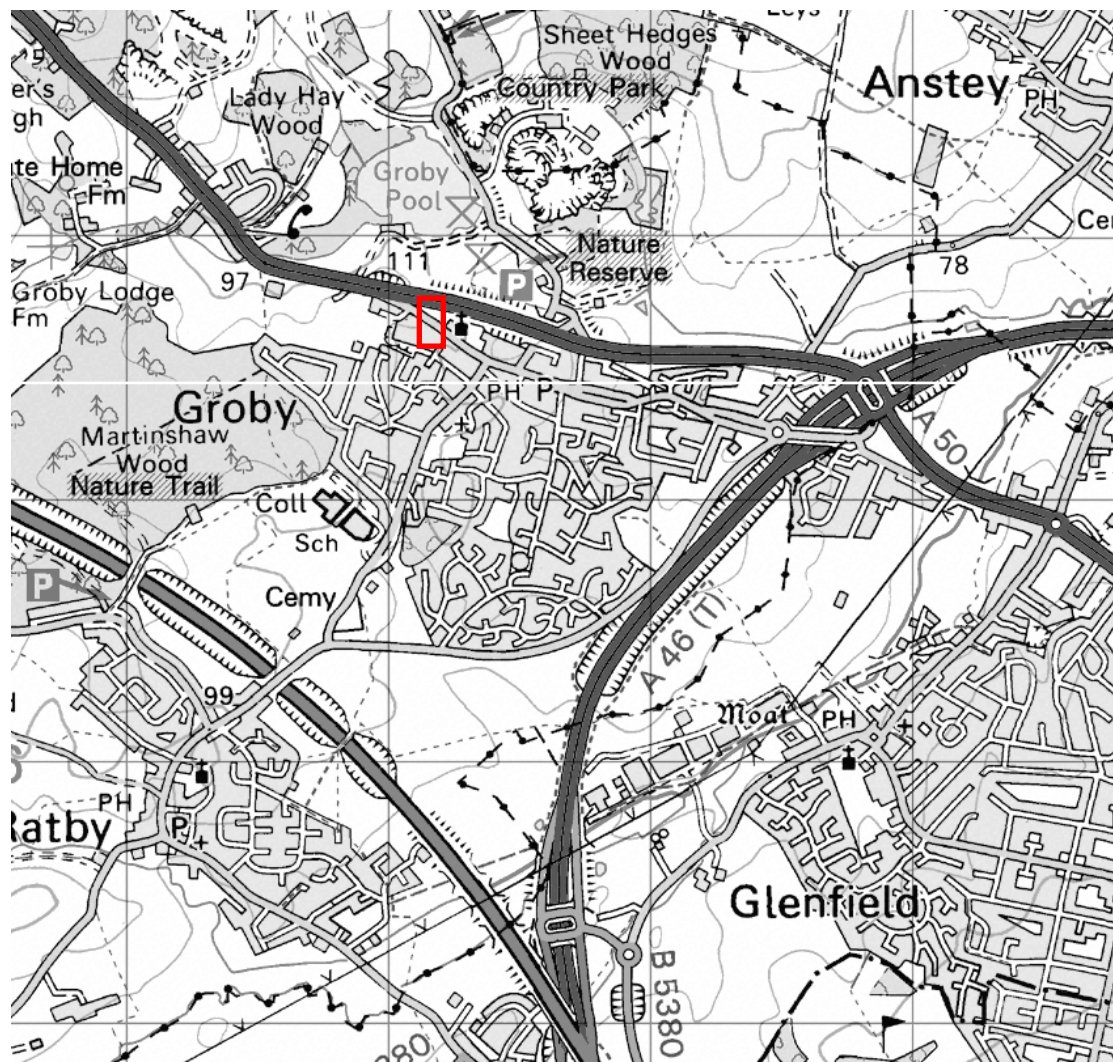


Figure 1: Site Location. Scale 1: 25 000
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Historical and Archaeological Background

The Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that there are possible Iron Age cropmarks known to the west of the proposed development area (MLE2768) and an Iron Age coin was discovered during the excavation of the A50 (MLE9386). A Bronze Age flint arrowhead was discovered in a back garden off Elsalene Drive (MLE 6347).

There is a possible Roman occupation site to the north east of the development site (MLE2770 & 2771) and Roman pottery has been found in Crane Ley Road (MLE7931) and Highfield Road (MLE 7929).

The scheduled monument of the motte and bailey castle and the Manor House lie just to the east of the site (DLE 336). Excavations were carried out here in 1962-3 on the motte and bailey prior to the construction of the bypass. This revealed that the bailey partially consisted of a rock cut ditch and also revealed evidence of an inner bailey. This work, along with early map evidence, shows the proposed development area as lying within the bailey itself. Archaeological remains within the castle ground may therefore have been disturbed by the proposed development.

The site of a mineral railway runs up the eastern side of the site, between 30, Markfield Road and the wall of the church. This was used to carry material from Groby quarry to the Leicester and Swannington railway line (MLE 16161). It was apparently opened in 1831 and replaced an earlier horse drawn wagon line. It is unclear to what extent the visible cutting today represents the original profile or to what extent the line has been in-filled. What is known is that the railway ran under the present Markfield Road through a tunnel, which is still likely to be in situ and that the cutting was in-filled in the 1960s to a depth of several metres.

Aims and Methods

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological deposits and, if present, determine their extent, character and quality of preservation. This would allow the Planning Archaeologist to assess the potential impact of the proposed development upon any archaeological remains.

All work followed the *Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* and adhered to the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Manager's (SCAUM) Health and Safety Manual and ULAS's Health and Safety Guidelines (2001) and Health and Safety Policy (2001). The recording followed the ULAS Field Recording Manual.

The Brief asked for a 5% sample of the site, which equated to four evaluation trenches measuring 30m by 1.6m (JCB bucket width). This was in accordance with the advice given in 'Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland' (L.C.C 1997).

It was proposed that three of these trenches should be placed on the main site behind 30, Markfield Road within the proposed footprints of the building development with a further trench to be placed at the eastern edge of the site, in the proposed car parking area.

All the trenches were excavated with a toothless ditching bucket by a JCB 3CX backactor under constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The trenches were to be excavated to the top of archaeological deposits or the natural sub-strata, whichever was the higher.

All the trenches were excavated largely in their intended locations. Trench 1, which was the trench situated at the site of the dismantled railway was excavated to a depth of c.0.9m as it became clear that the area had been heavily in-filled to a depth that would exceed safe working practice.

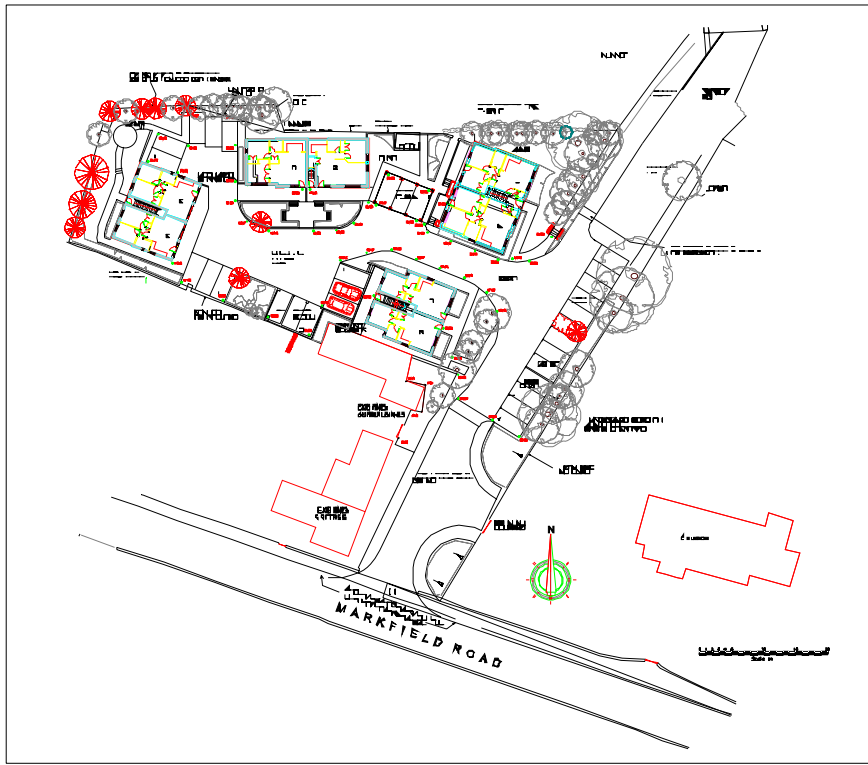


Figure 2: Plan of proposed development; provided by developer

Results

See Figure 3 for trench plan

Trench 1

This trench was oriented north-east to south west between the site of the old mineral railway and the church wall. Topsoil was only in evidence at the north east end of the trench and this lay over a layer of a hardcore consisting of grey mill waste. Throughout the rest of the trench the mill waste was the upper layer. The mill waste lay directly over compacted re-deposited Mercia Mudstone clay, which in the upper layers contained large amounts of broken ceramic building material.

Several silted up manholes could be seen in this area, which were associated with a sewer serving the church. The cut for the sewer trench was uncovered in the base of trench 1 towards the north east end and ran approximately north to south across the trench. A further two manholes were seen to the south of the trench with a further one in the far north east corner of the field. All these appeared to have fallen out of use.

Excavation of trench 1 was halted when it became apparent that the re-deposited clay was of some depth.

No archaeological features were discovered in this trench. The topsoil, the debris and the surface contained sherds of modern pottery and tile, mainly white or willow pattern.

Interval	0m(SW)	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m(NE)
Topsoil Depth	None	None	None	None	0.29m	0.14m	0.06m
Mill Waste Depth	0.2m	0.23m	0.07m	0.04m	0.44m	0.35m	0.2m
Base*	0.79m	0.55m	0.67m	0.51m	0.81m	0.89m	0.68m

*Compacted clay in-fill.



Plate 1: Trench 1 with sewer trench at north east end, looking south west

Trenches 2-4 were placed on the triangular field to the north of 30, Markfield Road. Until recently this area had been planted with conifer trees, which had been felled prior to the commencement of this work. Throughout the site the soils were heavily disturbed by roots and tree stumps.

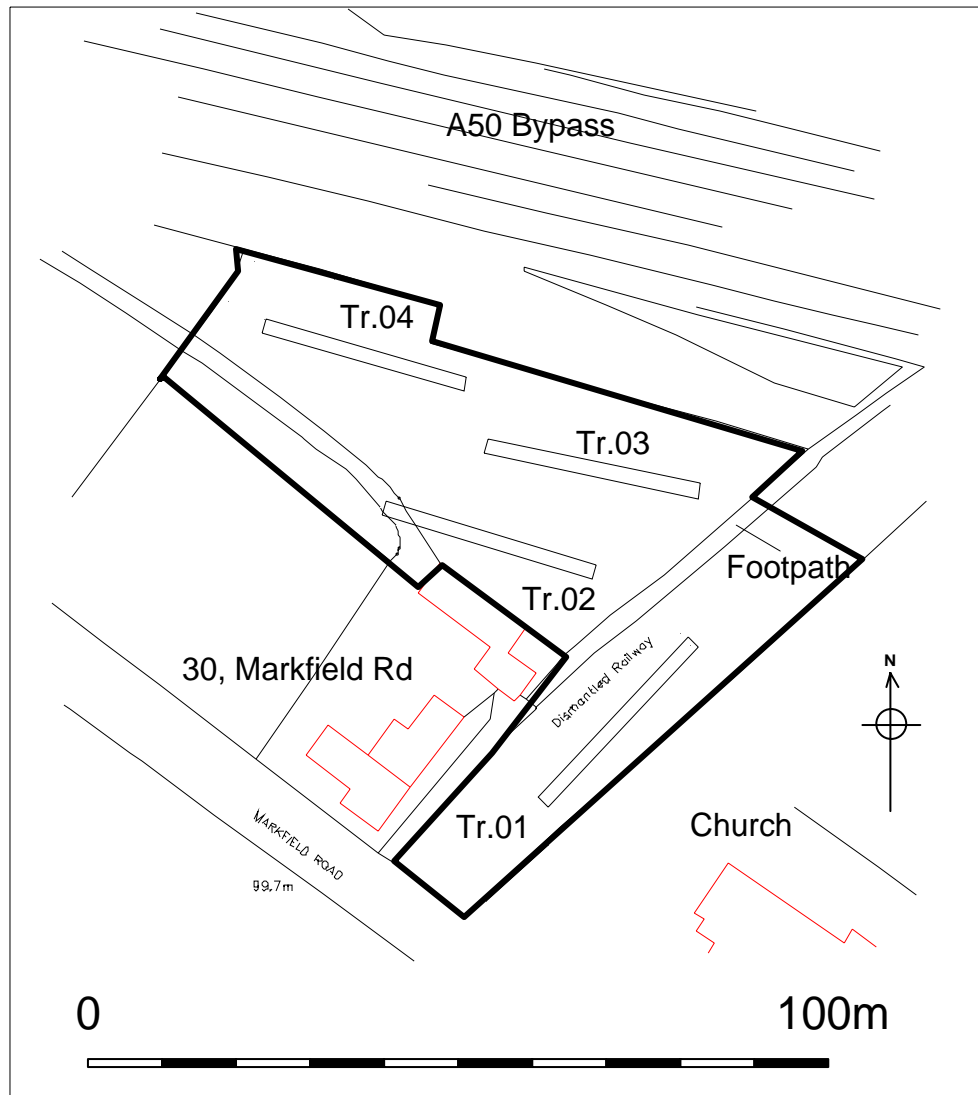


Figure 3: Trench location plan

Trench 2

This trench was oriented east-south-east to west-north-west and was placed close to the northern wall of the nearby building. At the south east end the topsoil was quite shallow and directly overlay the Mercia Mudstone sub-stratum. As the trench progressed north west the topsoil became much deeper and appeared to consist of two separate types: one a pale brown clayey silt and the other a dark grey sandy silt, with the pale brown one overlying the darker in most places, but not exclusively. In the south east end of the trench the darker topsoil overlay brick, tile and other demolition debris.

In the west-north-west end of the trench the topsoil overlay a surface, which consisted of large and medium-sized grey slate and, towards the western extent of the trench, mill waste overlying brown modern hardcore.

In some places large pieces of granite protruded through the Mercia Mudstone making progress difficult. A slate land drain was encountered at around 10m from the east south east end.

No archaeological features or finds associated with archaeological features were discovered in this trench. All the pieces of tile, brick and pottery discovered in the occupation debris were modern in date.

Interval	0m(ESE)	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m(WNW)
Topsoil Depth	0.18m*	0.21m*	0.4m**	0.38m*	0.46m*	0.59m**	0.51m**
Top of natural	0.18m	0.21m	0.67m	0.74m	0.92m	0.91m	0.92m
Base	0.56m	0.52m	0.82m	0.95m	0.92m	1.04m	1.13m

* Topsoil 1 (pale brown clayey silt)

** Topsoil 2 (dark grey sandy silt)



Plate 2: Trench 2, showing topsoil variation in south west facing section. Looking north west



Plate 3: North east facing section of trench 2, showing surface. Looking south

Trench 3

This trench was placed at the eastern side of the site to the north of trench 2 and on a similar alignment. The sequence was very similar to trench 2, with two types of topsoil, one overlying the other in places. As in trench 2 the soil was shallower in the eastern end of the trench. The topsoil overlay a narrow layer of brown clayey subsoil, which was only visible in places.

The sub-stratum was Mercia Mudstone with pieces of granite therein. No archaeological features were discovered during the excavation of this trench. The topsoil contained small pieces of modern brick and modern pottery.

Interval	0m (E)	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m (W)
Topsoil 1*					*0.45m	*0.32m	*0.4m
Topsoil 2	0.45m	0.23m	0.23m	0.29m	0.69m	0.8m	0.9m
Subsoil	0.53m	0.5m	0.51m	0.49m	0.92m	0.96m	None
Top of Natural	0.53m	0.5m	0.51m	0.49m	0.92m	0.96m	0.90m
Base	0.76m	0.63m	0.66m	0.73m	1.04m	1.06m	0.98m

Topsoil1: Mid brown sandy silt

Topsoil 2: Mid greyish brown clayey silt



Plate 4: Trench 3, post-excavation, looking west

Trench 4

This trench was placed towards the western edge of the field. It was shortened slightly to 28.5m as large tree trunks were situated at either end. It was oriented east south east to west north west.

The trench also showed evidence for two soils, although in this case the main topsoil was very thick (up to 1.1m deep) and overlay very compacted older topsoil throughout most of the trench. In the middle of the trench the brown topsoil directly overlay the Mercia Mudstone sub-stratum.

There were no archaeological features located in this trench and there was little evidence of the demolition debris seen in trenches 2 and 3, although the compacted buried soil contained small pieces of modern brick and tile.

Interval	0m(WNW)	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	28.5m(ESE)
Topsoil	0.6m	0.7m	0.8m	1.1m	1.1m	0.9m	0.68m
Buried soil	0.7m	0.85m	1m	None	None	1m	0.77m
Base*	0.9m	1m	1.15m	1.15m	1.2m	1.15m	0.78m

* Top of natural

Topsoil: Loose brown clayey silt

Buried soil: Compacted very dark grey clayey silt



Plate 5: South facing section of trench 4, showing thick loose topsoil overlying earlier compacted soil layer. Looking north

Conclusion

Trench 1, which was placed on the site of the dismantled mineral railway showed that the cutting for the railway was in-filled with Mercia Mudstone clay to some significant depth. The desk-based assessment had not highlighted that the railway ran under the Markfield Road and in retrospect the placing of a trench in an area known to have been in-filled to such a depth was largely irrelevant to an evaluation of the area. However, it does prove the eye witness reports of the cutting being in-filled with Groby clay during the 1960s (Alison Coates pers. comm.).

The surface seen in the western end of trench 2 is known to have been a trackway, which led from the back of the outbuildings to the fields to the west and served as the landowner's access (Liz Emerson pers. comm.). This is shown on some later maps of the area (Figure 5). It would appear that the trackway was widened and consolidated at some point by the addition of the hardcore area to the west of the area that was comprised of slate.

Throughout the site to the rear of the building there was evidence of demolition rubble. Some maps show a small building in the south east corner of the site (Figure 4) and this would seem appropriate as the majority of the building material was discovered in the trenches to the east.

Throughout trenches 2-4 there is evidence that a modern layer of loose topsoil overlay a compacted darker layer of buried soil. In some areas this darker layer is nearer the surface and this would suggest that topsoil may have been brought into the site at some point to level it, or to provide extra topsoil for cultivation. The site was recently used as a Christmas tree farm so it is possible that the deep topsoil was brought in to build up the otherwise quite shallow soil layer.

The site also lies directly to the south of the A50 bypass and it is possible that the construction of the road may also have been the origin of some of the dumped material.

No archaeological features were discovered during the excavation of the evaluation trenches and there were no finds associated with archaeological features.

Bibliography

Bocock, S 2006 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for a Proposed Development at Newtown Linford Lane, Groby, Leicestershire (SK 524 075)*. ULAS Report No. 2006-143

Shore, M. 2007 *An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching for a proposed development at Newtown Linford Lane, Groby, Leicestershire (SK 524 075)*. ULAS Report No. 2007-023

Acknowledgements

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Archive

An archive of the evaluation will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services with accession number X.A59.2007 and consists of the following:

- 1 Copy of this report
- 4 Trench Recording Sheets
- 1 Photo Record Sheet
- 1 B&W Contact Sheet
- 1 Set B&W Negatives
- 1 Contact Sheet of Digital Photographs
- 1 CD of Digital Photographs

Leon Hunt

ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel:0116 252 2848

Fax: 0116 252 2614

Email: lh90@le.ac.uk

20/04/07

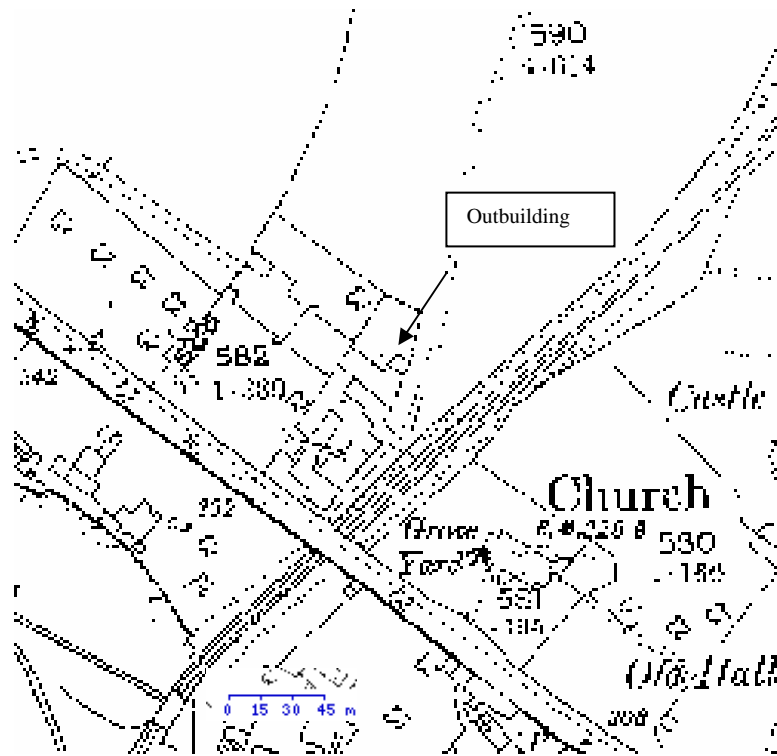


Figure 4: 1886 OS map of Groby (XXX.4), with outbuilding shown in development area. Note railway running under road

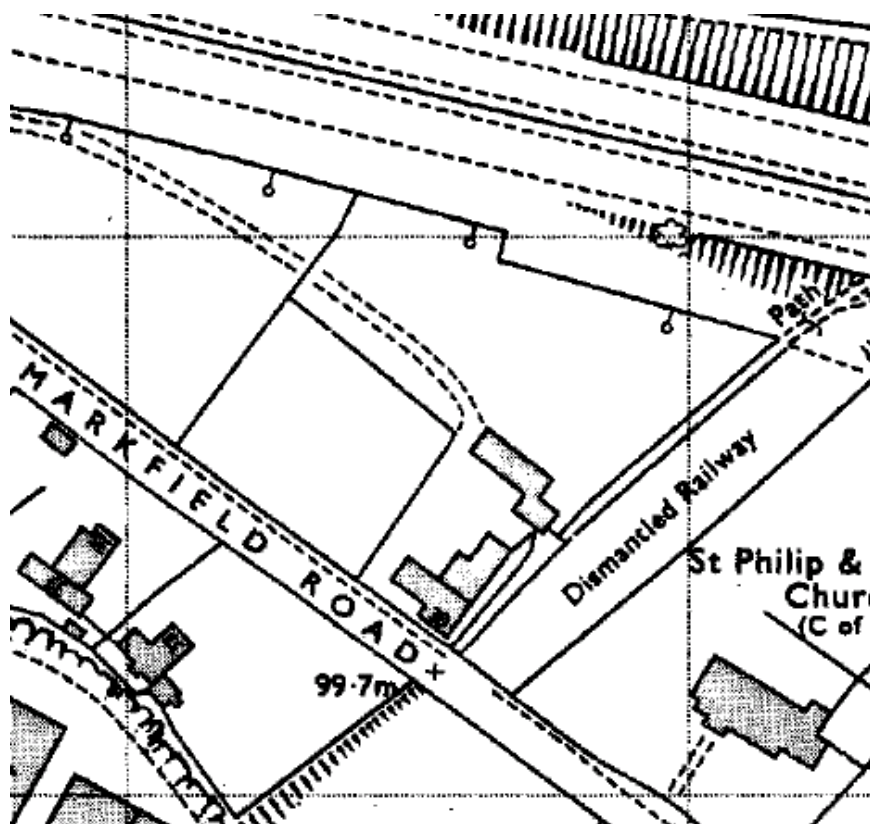


Figure 5: 1980 OS map of Groby, showing trackway leading off to west. Scale 1:2500
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APPENDIX 1

BRIEF FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND ADJACENT TO 30, MARKFIELD ROAD, GROBY, LEICESTERSHIRE

APPENDIX 2

DESIGN SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY TRIAL TRENCHING