

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
On Land at Manor Farm,  
Humberstone, Leicester,  
(SK 627 065)**

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## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Report &amp; archive</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Results</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>15</b>
Figure 1: Site Location.	2
Figure 2: Application area.	4
Figure 3: Trench location and numbering.	6
Figure 4: Plan of trench 1	7
Figure 5: Section of linears in trench 1	8
Figure 6: Plan of trench 4	10
Figure 7: West facing section of Iron Age ditch	12
Section A: South facing section of trench 4	11
Section B: North facing section of mill foundations	11
Profile C: Profile of mill foundation	11
<b>Appendix 1: context description</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Photographs</b>	<b>16</b>
Picture 1 – Trench 1 facing north	
Picture 2 – Trench 1 looking NE post ex	
Picture 3 – Trench 4 looking east (e-w mill footings)	
Picture 4 - Trench 4 looking west (e-w mill footings)	
Picture 5 – Trench 4 looking NE (Iron Age ditch [402])	
Picture 6 – Trench 4 looking NE (ditches [408] + [411])	
<b>Appendix 3: The Finds</b>	<b>17</b>

## An Archaeological Evaluation On Land at Manor Farm, Humberstone, Leicester, Leicestershire (SK 627 065).

Ioannis S. Altsitzoglou

### Summary

*Archaeological trial trenching was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in November 2006 in advance of proposed development on land at Manor Farm, Humberstone, Leicester (SK 6287 0639 – centre), for Gateway College and EDP.*

*Archaeological deposits were located, ranging in date from the Iron Age to the post medieval periods. A full copy of the archive will be presented to Leicester Museums. This archive will include all written, digital, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken under the accession number A.32.2006.*

### Location

The site lies approximately 4.5 km northeast of Leicester city centre (**Fig 1**). The proposed development site consists of an area of c.1.5 ha. south of Hamilton Way and north of Keyham Lane. The site lies on a boulder clay ridge overlooking Humberstone village to the south and Quakesick Spinney to the north.

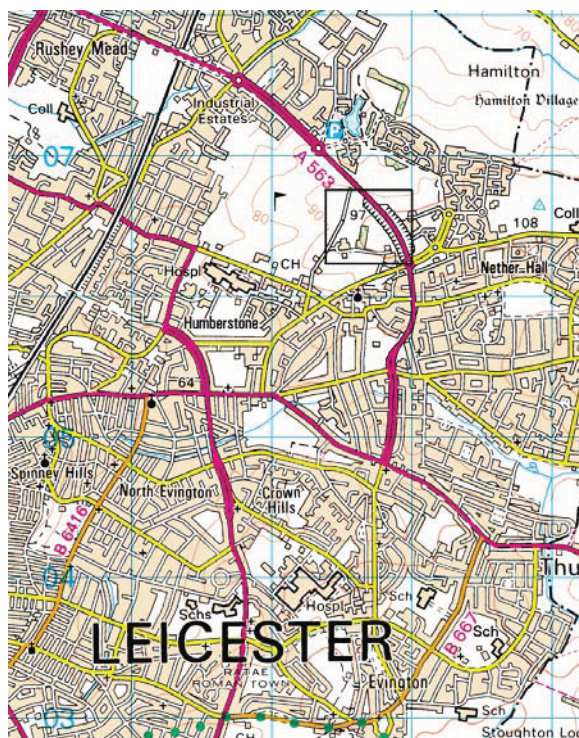


Figure 1. Site Location

Reproduced from the Landranger 129 Nottingham and Loughborough area 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10002186.

## Background

A significant part of the surrounding area has been subject to archaeological assessment, evaluation and recording for a previous application (**Fig. 2**). The archaeological work was carried out in response to development proposals for the construction of two places of worship (Hindu Mission and Dawoodi Borah Jamaat complex), and access road and sewers to serve the development. An initial desk-based assessment prepared by ULAS (ULAS Rep. No. 98/103) showed that the site lay within an area of high archaeological potential. To the north and southeast a previously unknown Iron Age settlement had been revealed beneath ridge and furrow pasture fields excavated by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (SMR Ref: LC567; Charles *et al* 2000). The site also lay close to the medieval village of Humberstone and one of its manors to the south. The majority of the development area was also covered with the remains of ridge and furrow agricultural systems that had apparently lain undisturbed since the medieval period. Subsequent evaluative work on the area including geophysical survey (ULAS Rep. No. 99/88) and trial trenching (ULAS Rep. No's. 99/79; 2001 – 167) confirmed the presence of Iron Age occupation remains including circular buildings, enclosure ditches, gullies, pits and post holes. Sample excavation of features revealed in the trenches yielded artefactual evidence of habitation, including pottery, animal bone, flint tools and highlighted the potential for survival of environmental remains.

A large scale open area excavation was undertaken in 2001-2 (Thomas 2003). This revealed areas of well-preserved remains including ring gullies, enclosure ditches and pits reflecting activity during the Iron Age. Two areas were identified; to the north a spread of open settlement with circular buildings, associated square enclosures, pits and drainage gullies. Evidence of metalworking was located in addition to pottery dating from the Middle-late Iron Age and animal bone. In form the area was similar to LC567 (Charles 2000) and may be an extension of this. To the south a series of sub-rectangular enclosure demarcated settlement areas, with several circular structures pits and gullies within the enclosures. Finds included loom weight remains, a bone pin and Late Iron Age pottery. Further geophysical survey in 2004 indicates that the site extends further west. This site is a rare example of a regionally important 'aggregated' Iron Age settlement.

Earthworks of a probable post –medieval mill are present on the westernmost edge of the development area (SMR ref: LE434).

A search of the Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) indicates that the application area is situated within an area of known archaeological interest, immediately to the west of another (or part of the same) Iron Age settlement site (SMR Ref. LC567). Further Iron Age settlement evidence has been located *c.* 200m to the north (LC1434; Richards 2004; 2005). One km to the north Neolithic and Bronze Age activity and Iron Age and Roman settlements have been located (LC430; LC431; LC452; LC880). The area also lies 400m northeast of a medieval manor complex (LC436) including fishponds (LC439), rabbit warren (LC441) and chapel (LC440) and *c.*1km to the north of the medieval village of Humberstone (LC1304). Earthworks

of another post-medieval mill are present *c.* 600m to the east of the application area (LC434).



Figure 2.

Plan of application area showing areas where Iron Age settlement has been investigated. Scale 1:5000

### **Objectives**

The objective of the archaeological work was to ascertain whether any significant archaeological remains are present within the area to be developed. When identified, a sufficient sample to establish their extent, date, quality, character, form and potential was recorded. Further archaeological recording may be required in the light of the results of this programme.

### **Methodology**

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*.

Internal monitoring procedures were undertaken including visits to the site from the project manager. These ensured that project targets were being met and professional standards were being maintained. Provision was made for an external monitoring meeting with a representative of the clients and Leicester City Council.

#### *Trial trenching*

The brief requested a minimum of 2% trenching of the area, amounting to six 30m trenches and a single 20m long trench, all of single JCB bucket width. A further 50m trenching had been allotted as contingency.

The topsoil and disturbed subsoil were removed in spits by machine using a toothless ditching bucket under full supervision, until archaeological deposits or undisturbed substrata were encountered.

The locations of the trenches were surveyed using a Total Station Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) linked to a Psion hand held computer.

Archaeological deposits located were hand cleaned and planned as appropriate to addressing the aims and objectives of the evaluation. Measured drawings of all archaeological features were prepared at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100. All plans were tied into the National Grid using an Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM).

All excavated sections of archaeological features were recorded and drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 scale, levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

#### **Report and Archive**

Before commencement of work an accession number was obtained from Leicester City Museums.

A full copy of the archive as defined in the 'Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage' (UKIC 1990), and 'Standards in the Museum care of archaeological collections' (MGC 1992) and 'Guidelines for the preparation of site archives and assessments for all finds (other than fired clay objects)' (RFG/FRG 1993) will be presented to Leicester Museums. This archive will include all written, disk-based, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

On completion of the fieldwork, the originating organisation will complete the on-line OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/>

The copyright of all original finished documents shall remain vested in ULAS and ULAS will be entitled as of right to publish any material in any form produced as a result of its investigations.

## Results

Eight trenches were excavated in the proposed development area. Their location is shown on **Figure 3**. They were arranged so as to maximise the likelihood of encountering archaeological remains within the field under investigation. Archaeological features were uncovered in trenches 1, 4 and 6. These comprised of two linear gullies in trench 1, a ditch in trench 6 and the west and east sides of the windmill ditch in trench 4, a linear in the centre of the mound and two, potentially Iron Age, ditches. Trenches 3, 5 and 7 had the remains of furrows and land drains. Trenches 2 and 8 were blank.

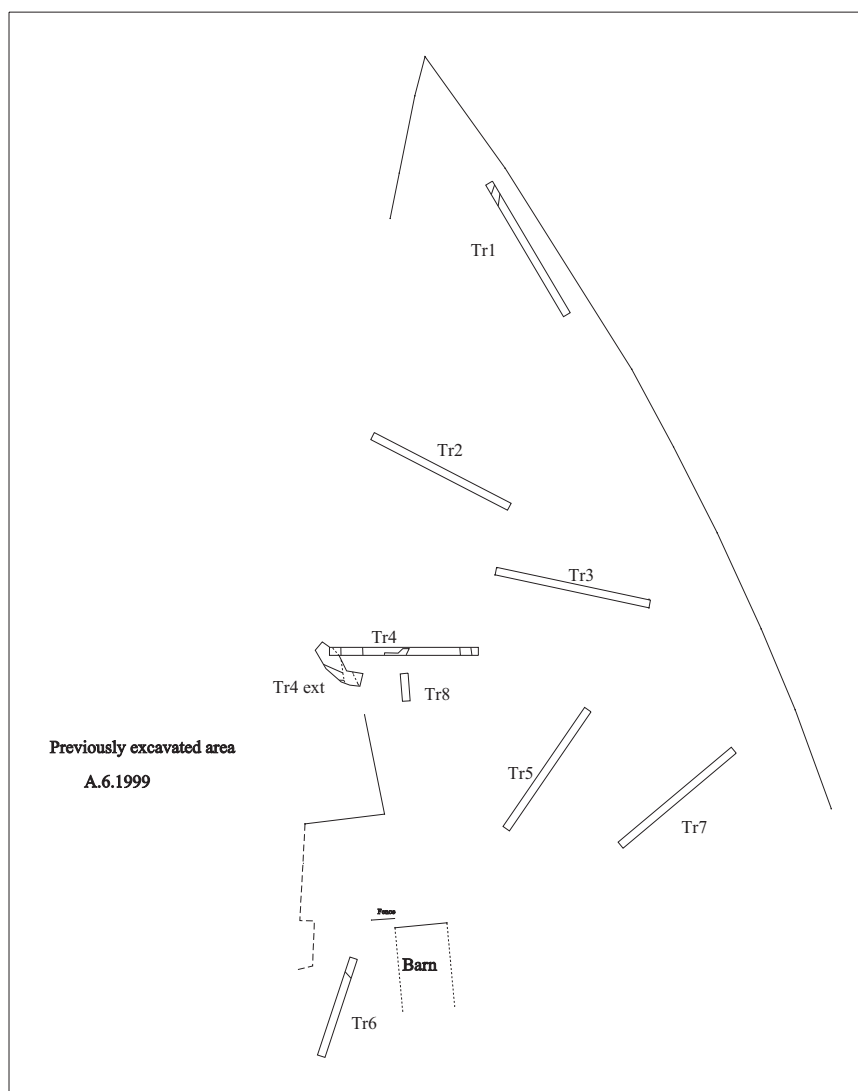


Figure 3. Trench location and numbering

*Trench 1*

*Depth of deposits*

<i>Interval (from N-end)</i>	<i>0m</i>	<i>15m</i>	<i>30m</i>
<i>Topsoil depth</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.10</i>
<i>Subsoil depth</i>	<i>0.15</i>	<i>0.20</i>	<i>0.41</i>
<i>Top of natural</i>	<i>0.19</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>0.51</i>
<i>Base of trench</i>	<i>0.23</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>0.51</i>

Trench 1 was located at the north end of the field under investigation. The trench measured 30m in length and 1.6m in width. The trench was excavated through dark grey brown silt clay topsoil, which varied in thickness between 0.04m and 0.1m. Below the topsoil, there was a layer of orangey yellow brown silt sandy clay sub-soil with very occasional sub-rounded pebbles, varying in depth from 0.21m to 0.41m.

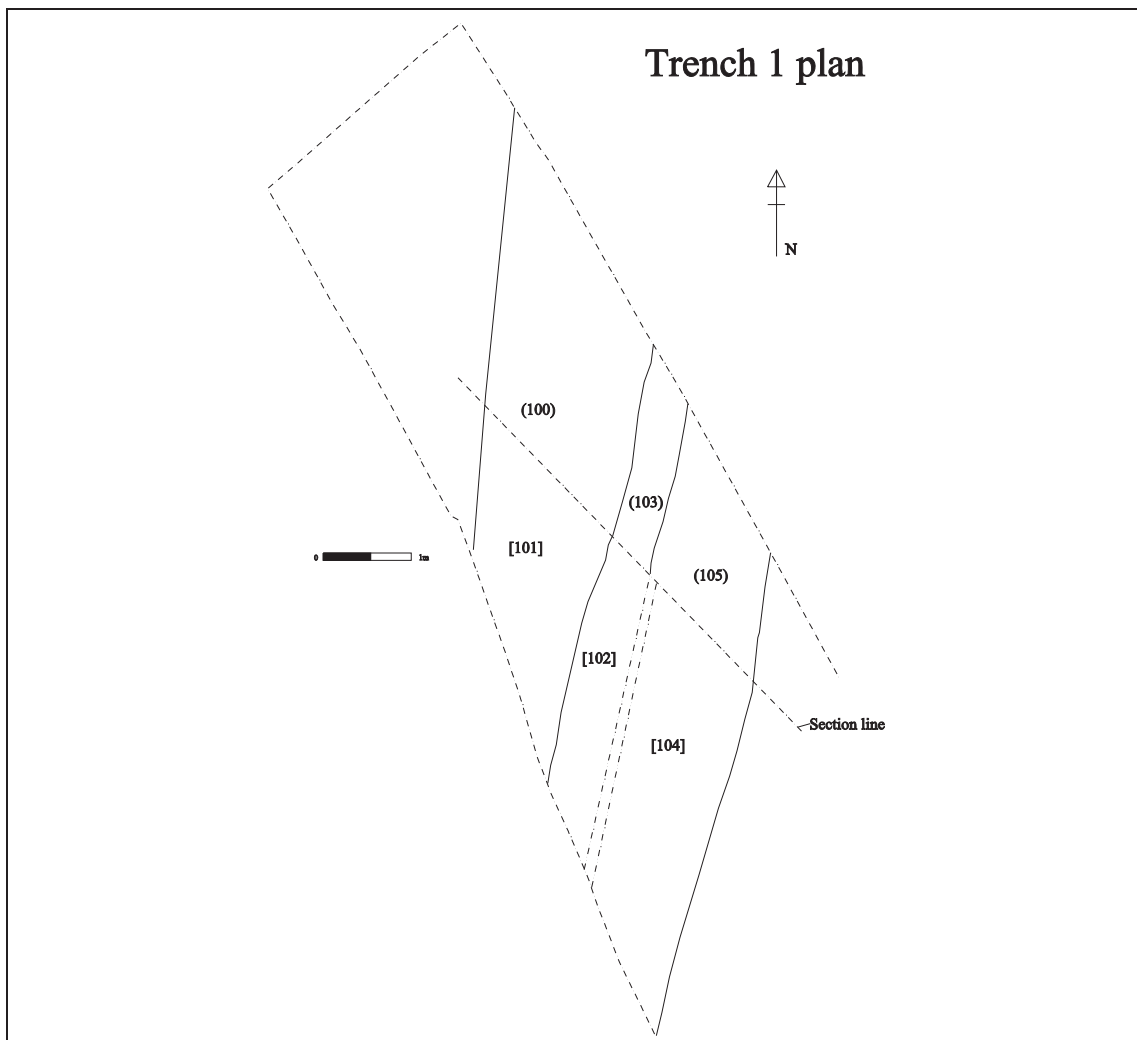


Figure 4.

Three linear features, [101], [102] and [104], all running roughly NE-SW, were identified, excavated and recorded in the north end of the trench (**Figures 4 and 5**). The northernmost feature, [101], had a single mid-brown silt sandy clay fill, (100).



This fill was slightly darker than the sub-soil, with occasional charcoal flecks. The southern edge was slightly uncertain and no finds were recovered from this feature. The middle feature, [102], was a land drain with a very dark brown silt clay fill; Post medieval pottery was retrieved from this feature. The southernmost feature, [104], contained a single brown silt clay fill, (105), from which, again, Post-medieval pottery (c.1650+) was recovered. The exact nature of these features could not be ascertained given the limited extent of excavation, but their being part of a field boundary system is highly probable.

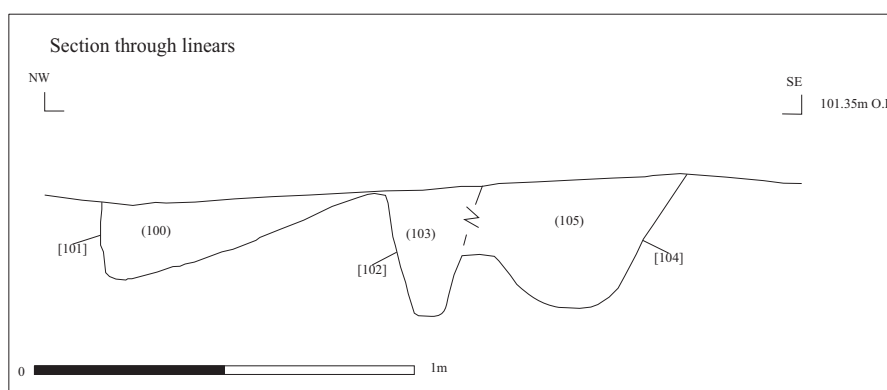


Figure 5.

### Trench 2

#### Depth of deposits

Interval (from NW-end)	0m	15m	30m
Topsoil depth	0.16	0.18	0.23
Subsoil depth	0.64	0.67	0.58
Top of natural	0.86	0.90	0.86
Base of trench	0.90	0.95	0.86

Trench 2 was located south west of Trench 1. The trench measured 30m in length and 1.6m in width. The trench was excavated through dark grey brown silt clay topsoil, which had a thickness varying in depth from 0.16m to 0.23m. Below the topsoil, there was a layer of orangey yellow brown silt sandy clay sub-soil with very occasional sub-rounded pebbles varying from 0.58 to 0.67m in depth. No archaeological activity was identified in this trench although there does appear to be an above average build up of subsoil in this trench.

### Trench 3

#### Depth of deposits

Interval (from W-end)	0m	15m	30m
Topsoil depth	0.20	0.21	0.21
Subsoil depth	0.39	0.33	0.34
Top of natural	0.62	0.57	0.57
Base of trench	0.62	0.62	0.57

Trench 3 was located just to the north east of the windmill mound. The trench measured 30m in length and 1.6m in width. The trench was excavated through dark grey brown silt clay topsoil, which had a thickness of c. 0.20m. Below the topsoil, there was a layer of orangey yellow brown silt sandy clay sub-soil with very

occasional sub-rounded pebbles, varying in depth from 0.33m to 0.39m. This trench contained only one furrow and three land drains all running in a north-south direction. No archaeological activity was identified in this trench.

*Trench 4*

*Depth of deposits*

<i>Interval (from W-end)</i>	<i>0m</i>	<i>15m</i>	<i>30m</i>
<i>Topsoil depth</i>	<i>0.33</i>	<i>0.23</i>	<i>0.28</i>
<i>Subsoil depth</i>	<i>0.85</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0.30</i>
<i>Top of natural</i>	<i>1.18</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0.52</i>
<i>Base of trench</i>	<i>1.18</i>	<i>0.40</i>	<i>0.52</i>

This trench was located across the windmill mound in an east-west orientation. The trench measured 30m in length and 1.6m in width. The trench was excavated through dark grey brown silt clay topsoil, which had a thickness of *c.* 0.28m. Underneath this was a layer of re-deposited natural substratum spread across the mound which was formed from re-deposited sub-soil up-cast from the excavation of the windmill ditch. This layer was a light yellow brown silt clay with flecks of limestone.

The mound was surrounded by a ditch. The removal of the topsoil for the trench revealed the ditch on the west and east. Cut [406] on the western side, was concave with a shallow gradient but was not bottomed due to flooding. It was filled with re-deposited natural substratum, (405) (**Section A**). The eastern cut, [408], was symmetrically concave in profile, with associated fills, (405) and (409) from which medieval Chilvers Coton ware pottery was recovered dating to *c.* 1250+.

In the middle of the mound an east-west running linear feature, [407] (**Section B and Profile C**), was discovered. This is thought to most likely be the remains of the cross-tree foundations with fill (405), from which a single sherd of Iron Age, and a sherd of Late medieval/early Post-medieval pottery was recovered alongside hand made iron nails and the remains of at least two iron knife blades.

An earlier feature, [411], with a dark grey silt clay fill (410), was observed but not fully excavated because of health and safety reasons. Cut by the eastern ditch [408] (**Section A**), it did not yield any finds.

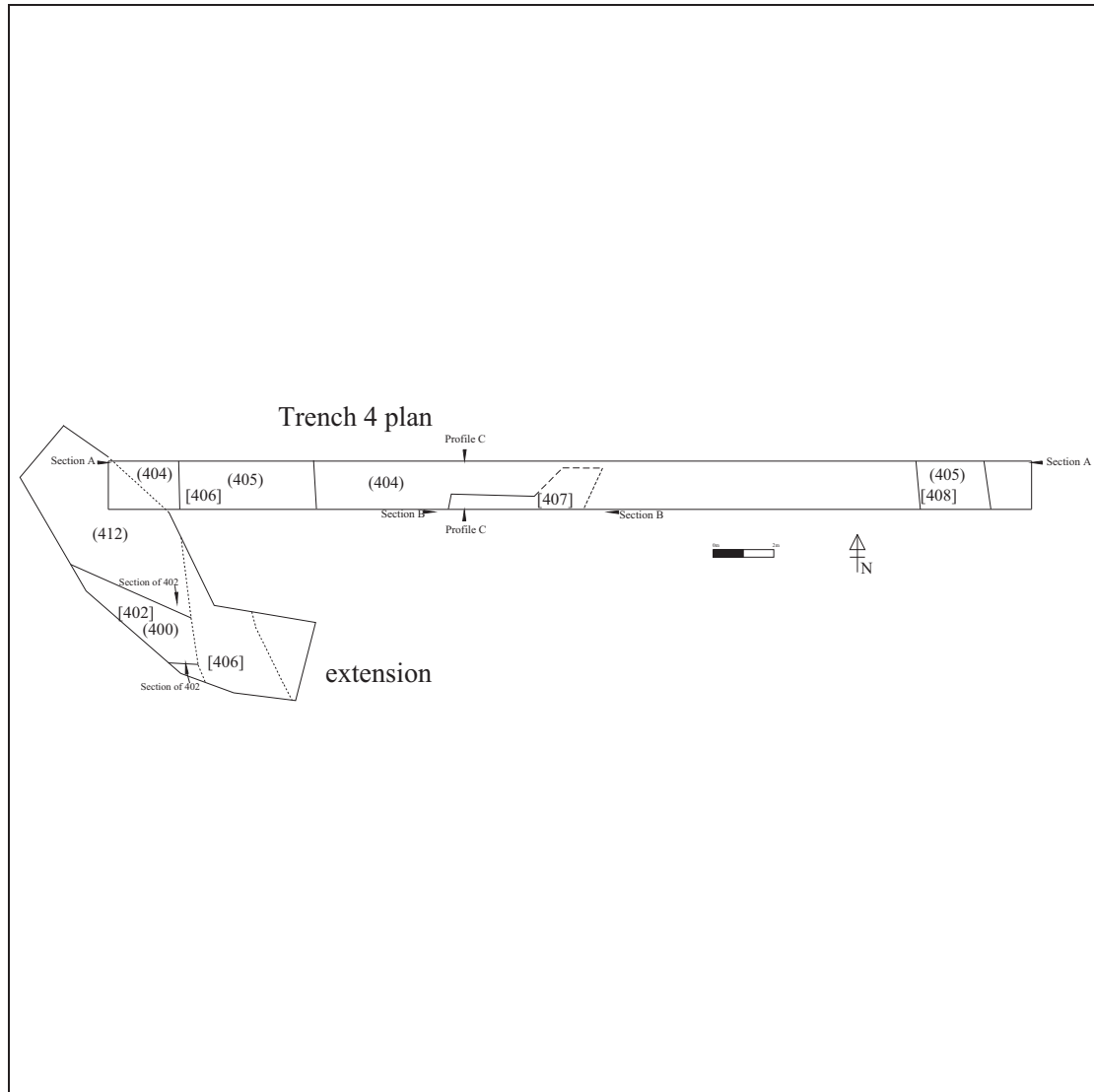
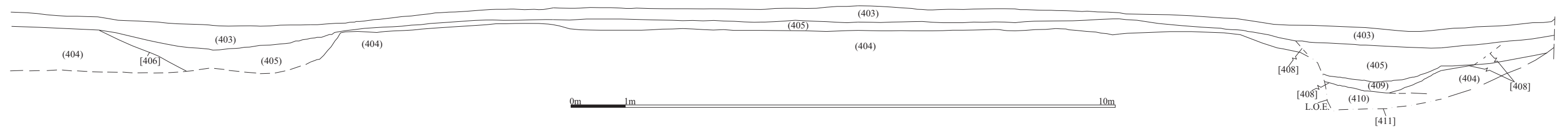


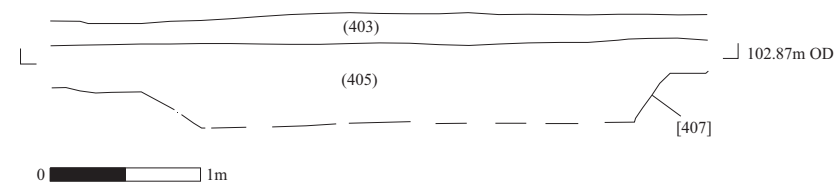
Figure 6

An extension of the trench from the western edge towards the south west revealed further evidence for an Iron Age ditch, [402] (**Figure 7**), partially excavated during earlier work (ULAS Report 2003-200), with fills (400) and (401) which contained Late Iron Age pottery and an Early Bronze Age Plano-convex flint knife. It ran in an east-south-east direction and was cut by the circular windmill ditch.

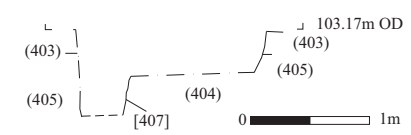
Section A - South facing windmill trench



Section B - North facing section of trench showing cut of [407]



Profile C - mill foundations



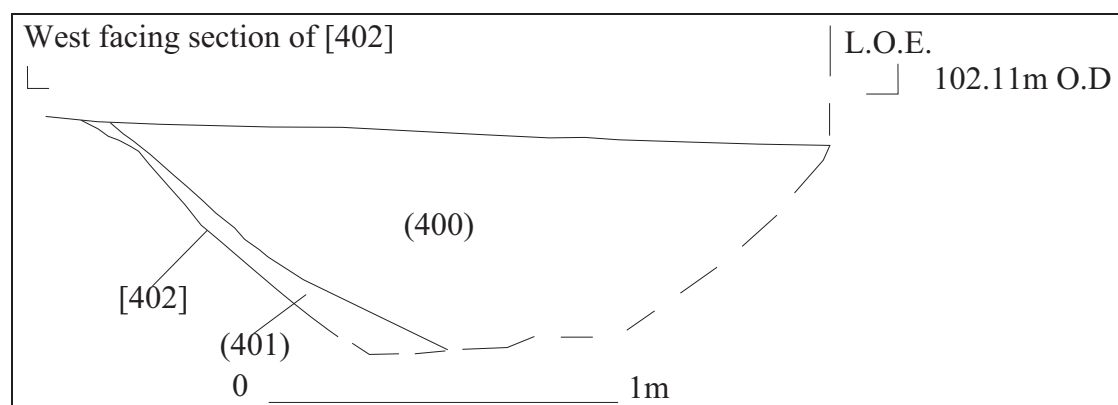


Figure 7.

### Trench 5

#### Depth of deposits

Interval (from W-end)	0m	15m	30m
Topsoil depth	0.44	0.20	0.24
Subsoil depth	0.18	0.47	0.38
Top of natural	0.65	0.71	0.65
Base of trench	0.65	0.71	0.65

Trench 5 was located just to the south east of the windmill mound. The trench measured 30m in length and 1.6m in width. The trench was excavated through dark grey brown silt clay topsoil, which had a thickness of *c.* 0.20m. Below the topsoil, there was a layer of orangey yellow brown silt sandy clay sub-soil with very occasional sub-rounded pebbles, varying in depth from 0.33m to 0.39m. This trench contained three furrows with land drains placed into the middle of them, all running in a north-south direction. Three square features were examined but proved to be modern activity relating to drains. No archaeological deposits were identified in this trench although a small group of abraded Iron Age pottery sherds was recovered from one of the furrows. It is likely, given the general proximity of the trench to known areas of prehistoric activity, that the furrows had disturbed archaeological features associated with the Iron Age occupation.

### Trench 6

#### Depth of deposits

Interval (from NE-end)	0m	10m	20m
Topsoil depth	0.05	0.20	0.19
Subsoil depth	0.55	0.50	0.46
Top of natural	0.70	0.75	0.70
Base of trench	0.85	0.75	0.70

This trench was the most southerly excavated and measured 20m in length and 1.6m in width. The trench was excavated through dark grey brown silt clay topsoil, which had a thickness varying between 0.05 to 0.20m. Below the topsoil, there was a layer of orangey yellow brown silt sandy clay sub-soil with very occasional sub-rounded pebbles, varying in depth from 0.46m to 0.55m.

The northern edge of prehistoric ditch [604] was identified at a depth of 0.85m, although the southern edge of this feature was not established. The fill of this linear

feature, (603), was remarkably similar to the natural substratum into which the feature was cut and was identified by troweling its surface. However, as this end of the field was very wet, and it had already been examined in the previous phase of archaeological work it was not excavated.

#### *Trench 7*

##### *Depth of deposits*

<i>Interval (from NE-end)</i>	<i>0m</i>	<i>15m</i>	<i>30m</i>
<i>Topsoil depth</i>	<i>0.26</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.21</i>
<i>Subsoil depth</i>	<i>0.14</i>	<i>0.30</i>	<i>0.28</i>
<i>Top of natural</i>	<i>0.42</i>	<i>0.52</i>	<i>0.53</i>
<i>Base of trench</i>	<i>0.42</i>	<i>0.52</i>	<i>0.53</i>

This trench was the easternmost examined and measured 30m in length and 1.6m in width. The trench was excavated through dark grey brown silt clay topsoil, which had a thickness varying between 0.13 to 0.26m. Below the topsoil, there was a layer of orangey yellow brown silt sandy clay sub-soil with very occasional sub-rounded pebbles, varying in depth from 0.14m to 0.30m. The trench revealed only furrows running east-west and a land drain running north-south were present. A retouched flint flake fragment was found in one of the furrow fills along with a sherd of medieval Potters Marston ware dating to c.1100-c.1300.

#### *Trench 8*

##### *Depth of deposits*

<i>Interval (from N-end)</i>	<i>0m</i>	<i>6m</i>
<i>Topsoil depth</i>	<i>0.20</i>	<i>0.20</i>
<i>Subsoil depth</i>	<i>0.80</i>	<i>0.65</i>
<i>Top of natural</i>	<i>1.00</i>	<i>0.85</i>
<i>Base of trench</i>	<i>1.00</i>	<i>0.85</i>

With Trench 4, this trench formed a 'T' shape on the windmill mound and was placed in order to ascertain whether the Iron Age ditch [402] continued this far. The trench measured 6m in length and 1.6m in width and was excavated through dark grey brown silt clay topsoil, which had a thickness of 0.20m. Below the topsoil, there was a layer of orangey yellow brown silt sandy clay sub-soil with very occasional sub-rounded pebbles, varying in depth from 0.65m to 0.80m. The trench contained no archaeological deposits.

### **Conclusion**

Trenches 2 and 8 were devoid of any features, while Trenches 3, 5, and 7 contained only medieval furrows and later land drains.

Trench 1 revealed the presence of two parallel linear features which may be the remains of a furrow and/or a field boundary. However, not enough of the features were exposed to make any definitive comments on their function.

Trench 4 has revealed the area with the highest survival of archaeological remains. The presence of an earlier ditch (which appeared to be extending westwards under the mound) under the eastern part of the windmill ditch, which had very similar fill in

colour and character to the Iron Age ditch already exposed just to the west of the mound, does suggest that there is potential for the survival of archaeological deposits beneath the mound.

Furthermore, the presence of a worked lithic instrument so close to the mound, in conjunction with the fact that a worked flint arrowhead was retrieved from the previous area of excavation, suggests the possibility that the mound may have earlier origins.

In Trench 5, the presence of a small concentration of Iron Age pottery within a furrow may suggest that archaeological remains of this period survive in this part of the site.

In Trench 6 the continued presence of a boundary ditch related to the southernmost Iron Age enclosure revealed during previous work on the site further emphasises the potential for surviving archaeology on the western edge of the development area.

### **Acknowledgements**

This report was compiled from information collected on site by Ioannis S. Altsitzoglou and Jen Hayward. John Thomas managed the project. The medieval and Post-medieval pottery was identified by Deborah Sawday, the Iron Age/early Roman pottery by Liz Johnson and the flint by Lynden Cooper.

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### Appendix 1: context descriptions

Context	Cut	Description
100	101	Fill of linear
101		Cut of linear
102		Cut of land drain
103	102	Fill of land drain
104		Fill of ditch
105	104	Cut of ditch
106		Top soil
107		Sub soil
108		Natural
200		Top soil
201		Sub soil
202		Natural
300		Top soil
301		Sub soil
302		Natural
400	402	Iron Age ditch fill
401	402	Iron Age ditch fill
402		Iron Age ditch cut
403		Top soil
404		Sub soil
405	406,407,408	Re-deposited natural
406		Western windmill ditch cut
407		Cut of e-w windmill footings
408		Eastern windmill ditch cut
409		Lower eastern ditch fill
410	411	Dark grey early ditch fill
411		Cut of early ditch under 408
412		Natural
500		Top soil
501		Sub soil
502		Natural
503	504	Furrow fill
504		Furrow cut
600		Top soil
601		Sub soil
602		Natural
603	604	Ditch fill
604		Ditch cut
700		Top soil
701		Sub soil
702		Natural
703	704	Furrow fill
704		Furrow cut
800		Top soil
801		Sub soil
802		Natural



Appendix 2: photographs



Picture 1- trench 1 facing north



Picture 2- trench 1 looking NE post ex



Picture 3- trench 4 looking east : e-w post mounting [407]



Picture 4- trench 4 looking west: e-w post mounting [407]



Picture 5- trench 4 looking NE: Iron Age ditch [402]



Picture 6- trench 4 looking NE: Ditches [408] + [411]

APPENDIX 3: **The pottery, flint and miscellaneous finds from an evaluation at Manor Farm, Humberstone, Leicester**

The pottery was examined under a binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series. The results, together with a list of the other finds are shown below.

Site/Parish: Manor Farm, Humberstone Accession No/ Doc Ref: A32 2006/Humbertsonel doc Material: Site Type: edge of IA site/n. windmill mound.	Submitter: J. Thomas Identifier: D. Sawday/L. Johnson/L. Cooper Date of Id: 18.12.06 Method of Recovery: evaluation
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Context	Fabric/ware	Nos	Weight grams	Comments
<b>POTTERY</b>				
103	EA2 – Earthenware 2	1	4	Post medieval/modern
105	EA6 - Blackware	1	9	c.1650+
105	EA3 – Mottled ware	1	17	Mug base, c.1650+
400 [402]	GT – Grog Tempered ware	2	16	Late Iron Age/Early Roman
400	S1 – Shell Tempered ware	1	2	Iron Age
405 [407]	Q1 – Sandy ware	1	11	Iron Age
405	CW2/MB - Cistercian ware 2 /Midland Blackware	1	7	Late medieval/early post medieval
409 [408] windmill ditch east	CC1 – Chilvers Coton ware 1	3	11	Jar rim, c.1250+
503 [504]	S1/Q1 - Sandy ware with shell?	3	15	Iron Age
503	Q1 – Sandy ware	1	4	Iron Age
703 [704]	PM – Potters Marston ware	1	4	c.1100-c.1300
<b>CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL</b>				
103	EA - Earthenware	1	29	? Roman
405 [407]	EA	1	5	? Roman
<b>IRON OBJECTS</b>				
405 [407]	1			? knife blade
405	2			? knife blade -joining
405	6			nails
<b>FLINT</b>				
400 [402]	1			Plano-convex knife, Early Bronze Age
503 [504]	1			Shatter – natural?
703 [704]	1			Retouched flake fragment