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LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at
Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby, LE8 0QL**

NGR: SK 67734 93050

Richard Huxley



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**An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at
Mill Lane,
Smeeton Westerby,
LE8 0QL**

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Richard Huxley

For: Phil Walker

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An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby, LE8 0QL

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Summary

The work at Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby consisted of the excavation of 3 trenches each measuring 15m long positioned over different areas of a proposed detached dwelling. The results of the evaluation show archaeological remains were present on the site with medieval pottery found overlying a layer of stones in trench 2. This trench also had 2 additional layers of stones at the northern end which appeared to be a deliberate dump potentially representing made-ground. The easterly trench had a modern and post-medieval gully orientated east to west and the southerly trench was negative, but was found to contain a layer of building rubble at the base of the subsoil. Several examples of unstratified medieval pottery that have unusual form and decoration for the region were also recovered.

The report will be archived under accession number X.A109.2018

Cover photo: Development site on arrival looking south-west.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for trial trenching at Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby (Figs 1-2). It details the programme of archaeological trial trenching that was undertaken in October 2018 and follows the strategy of work set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (WSI; ULAS 2018).

The proposed construction is for a detached dwelling and associated access (17/01732/FUL). The Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist as archaeological advisor to the planning authority, requested an archaeological field evaluation to identify and record any archaeological remains of significance in order to determine the impact of the proposed scheme on any buried archaeology.



Figure 1: Location of Smeeton Westerby



Figure 2: Position of the site in Smeeton Westerby

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The village of Smeeton Westerby lies south of Kibworth and north-west of Market Harborough in the Harborough District of Leicestershire. The proposed development site lies the north-west of the village, on the south side of Mill Lane (SK 67734 93050; Figs 1 - 2), at an elevation of approximately 115m OD. The land is enclosed by hedgerows with gates to the north and east. The site slopes to the south away from Mill Lane.

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology is likely to be Till, Mid Pleistocene Diamicton above Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation bedrock.

Archaeological and Historical Background

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application site lies within an area of archaeological interest within the historic medieval and post-medieval core of the village of Smeeton Westerby (HER Ref.: **MLE9333**), thereby having potential to contain evidence for Saxon and medieval occupation.

Relevant archaeological finds from Smeeton Westerby are summarised below by era.

Roman

A piece of late mid-2nd to 3rd century pottery was recovered during trial trenching at Debdale Farm (c.280m south-east of site) along with a piece of Roman tegula (**MLE20753**). Roman pottery was also unearthed (**MLE19266**) at 63 Main Street (c. 340m south-east of the site), and a Late Roman coin (**MLE7907**) found c. 485m south of the site at Westerby Farm.

Saxon

Trial trenching at Debdale Farm (c.280m south-east of site) recorded an east-west feature and a north-south ditch (presumably a boundary ditch). Finds included 17 sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery, pieces of fired clay and animal bone, slag and hammerscale (suggesting metalworking in the vicinity), grain and weed seeds (suggesting crop processing) (**MLE20752**). Residual Saxon pottery suggests activity on site before the ditches were dug. Finds recovered from Beaker Close (c.300m south-east of the site) includes rare Middle Saxon pottery along with pottery dating from the 10th to 13th centuries (**MLE19270**). Two sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery (**MLE19277**) were also found at 63 Main Street (c.340m south-east of the site).

Medieval

Medieval village earthworks were recorded (**MLE2394**) around Beaker Close (c.300m south-east of the site), which included a hollow way and house platforms. Rectangular soil marks to the west of this are probably also evidence of village closes. Two sherds of medieval pottery (**MLE19976**) was also found at 63 Main Street (c.340m south-east of the site).

Post-medieval to Modern

During test-pitting 142 sherds of post-medieval pottery (**MLE19984**) were recovered from the Village Green (c.280m south-east of the site), showing the site was lived on from around the late 16th century onwards. Over 120 sherds of Post-Medieval pottery (**MLE19977**) was also found at 63 Main Street (c.340m south-east of the site).

An undated burial was found (**MLE2392**) during the 19th century 1.460m south-east of the site, with references to further burials being found during quarrying. Archaeological

evaluations at Mill Lane just to the west and at 73 Main Street revealed no archaeological finds or deposits (Speed 2012, Lacombe 2017).

Aims and Objectives

The general objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development site
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site
- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to assess the impact of the proposed development on cultural heritage and to help formulate a mitigation strategy
- To record any archaeological deposits and produce an archive and report of any results.

The results of the evaluation will provide information in order for the local planning authority to make informed recommendations and to identify an appropriate mitigation strategy for the proposed development.

Research Objectives

While the nature, extent and quality of archaeological remains within the areas of investigation for the project remain unknown until archaeological work is undertaken, it is possible to determine some initial objectives derived from East Midlands Heritage research agenda (Cooper 2006, Knight et al. 2012). The site's location within the historic village core and just south of the church and the known archaeological sites on the HER suggests that there is potential for archaeological deposits from the medieval period onwards. The evaluation therefore has the potential to contribute to the following research agenda aims (RA) set out in Cooper 2006.

Early Medieval

How many studies of sites yielding late Roman metalwork elucidate further the relationship between indigenous and Germanic populations? (RA 6.1.6)

How may we enhance our understanding of the lead industry, the extraction and smelting of iron ore and the environmental impact of these activities? (RA 6.6.5)

High Medieval

How can we elucidate further the development of nucleated villages, and in particular the contribution of the Danelaw to changes in village morphology? (RA 7.2.1)

How can we shed further light upon the origin and development of dispersed hamlets and farms in champion and pastoral areas? (RA 7.2.2)

Post-Medieval – Industrial

How was pottery distributed across the region and can we identify competition between regional potteries? (RA 8.8.1)

These research aims have been identified based on the current state of knowledge within the area of the scheme. The research aims will be re-assessed and updated during the course of the fieldwork

Methodology

All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2014b) and adhered to their Code of Conduct (2014a).

A total of three 15m long trenches were proposed targeting the areas that will be most disturbed by building works. The provisional trench plan (Fig. 3) shows the location of the trenches. Trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed ground.

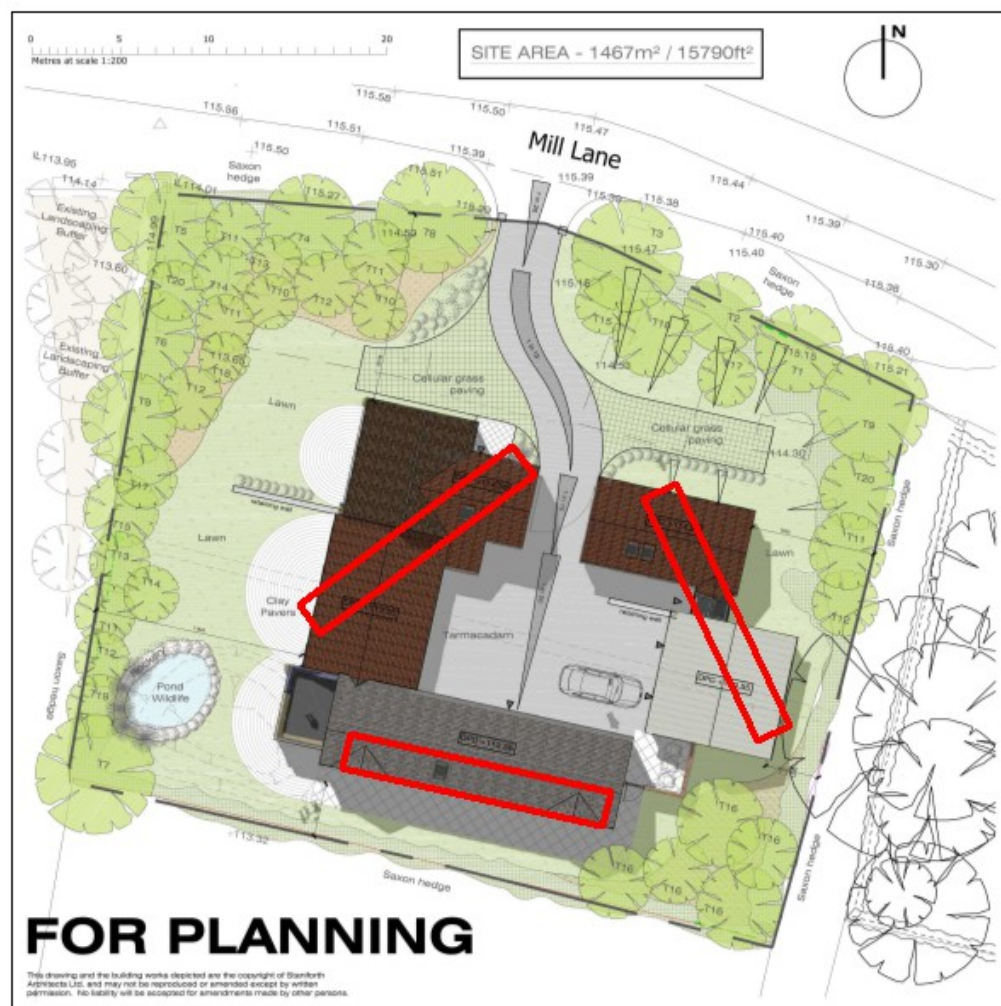


Figure 3: Trench plan overlaying the proposed construction.

Results

Trenches 1 and 3 were machined to the top of the natural substratum which was composed of light yellowy-grey clay occasionally containing pebbles and cobbles. Trench 2 was machined to the top of a possible archaeological horizon and a sondage was machined into either end to assess the layers and the depth to the top of the natural ground (Fig. 5).

The development area was found to contain a layer of modern made ground consisting of building rubble (stones, bricks and mortar) within a matrix of redeposited natural clay. This layer measured 0.12-0.38m thick and was found to occupy the northernmost two-thirds of the site. Topsoil was identified beneath the made ground comprising a dark brownish-grey clay and loam which measured 0.2-0.4m thick and was consistent across the site. The subsoil was composed of a mid-yellowish brown smooth silty clay that contained occasional pebbles and flecks of charcoal. Building rubble consisting of stones and roof slates were found at the interface between the subsoil and natural in Trench 3 and post-medieval pottery was found in the subsoil in Trench 2 (Sawday, p14).

The natural substratum in the northern end of the trench was the same as Trenches 1 and 3, however, the southern end of Trench 2 contained darker blueish grey patches of clay.

Table 1: Details of the trenches

Trench Number	Made-Ground depth (m)	Topsoil depth (m)	Subsoil depth (m)	Top of Natural (m)	Base of Trench (m)	Natural Substratum	Archaeology
1	0.16-0.3	0.2-0.25	0.19-0.26	0.6-0.75	0.6-0.75	Light yellowy grey clay occasional pebbles and cobbles	2 shallow linear gullies [01] and [03]. Modern/Post-medieval
2	0.12-0.38	0.2-0.4	0.12-0.32	1.2m where visible	0.77-1.2	Light yellowy grey clay and light brownish yellow clay with dark greyish blue patches	Stone layers in the north of trench and layers to the south containing medieval pottery.
3	None	0.2-0.25	0.05-0.15	0.3-0.4	0.38-0.5	Light yellowy grey clay occasional pebbles and cobbles	Negative trench. Some building rubble noted in subsoil.



Figure 4: Excavation of the trenches.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was positioned on a north-west to south-east orientation in the north-eastern corner of the proposed development. The trench was machined to a depth ranging from 0.6-0.75m, sloping to the south-east. It revealed two shallow parallel gullies orientated east to west dug into the natural substratum (Fig. 6). Feature [01] was the southerly feature and it measured >2m long by 0.45m wide and 0.1m deep. The cut had moderately sloping concave sides with a concave base and was filled by a mid-brownish grey silty clay (02) that contained flecks of charcoal, small stones and post-medieval pottery (Sawday,p14). To the north of [01] a second gully [03] was found which measured >2m long by 0.5m wide and 0.1m deep. This features also had moderately sloping concave sides with a concave base and was filled with mid brownish grey silty clay that contained flecks of charcoal, small stones and modern pottery (Sawday p14).

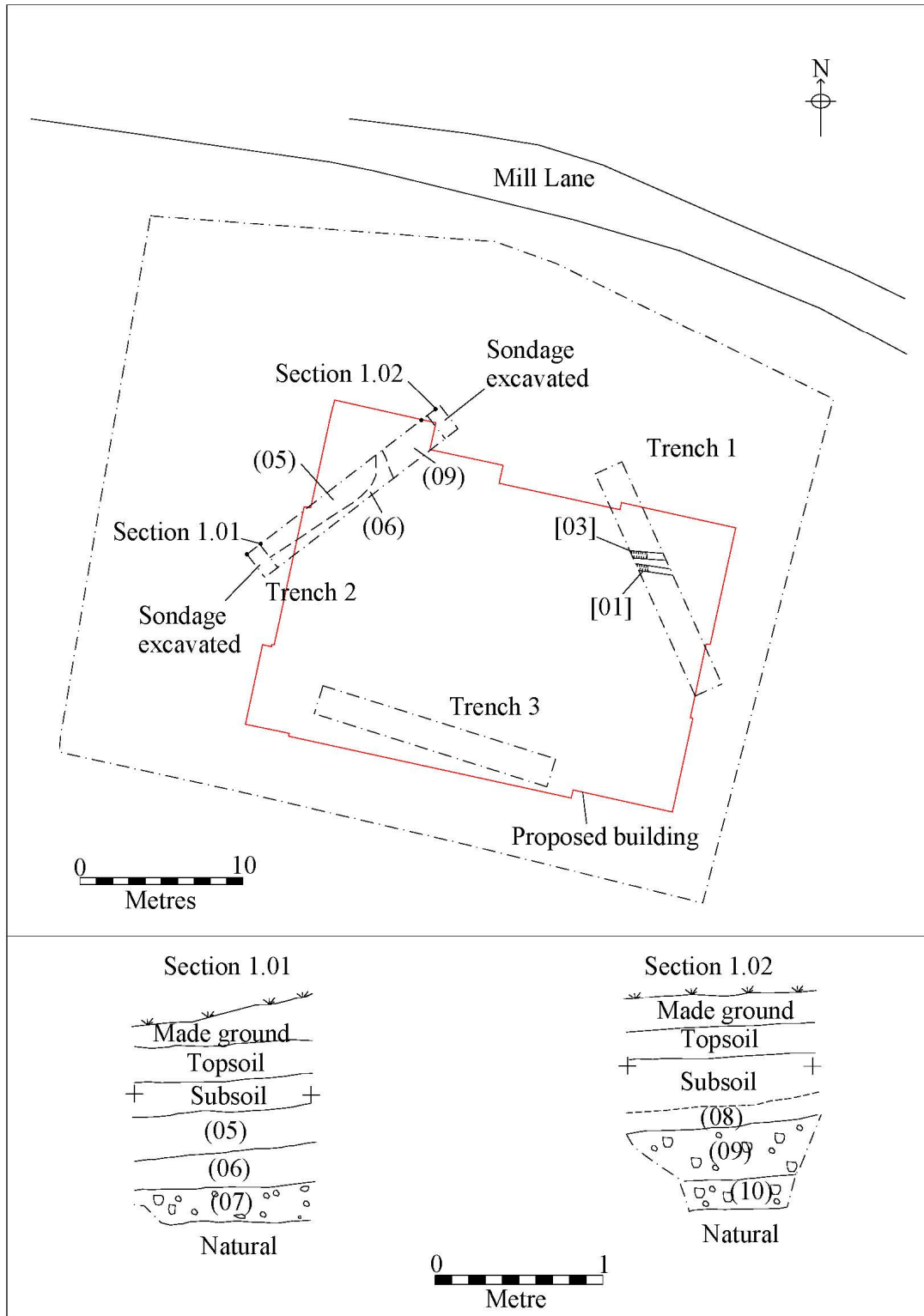


Figure 5: Plan of the site with details of the layers found in trench 2.



Figure 6: Trench 1 looking south-east.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was positioned on a north-east to south-west orientation over the north-western corner of the proposed development. The trench was initially machined to a depth ranging from 0.77-1.1m, sloping to the south-west. It revealed a number of mad ground layers throughout the entire trench (Fig. 7) and a sondage was machine excavated at either end to show the depth of the natural substratum (Figs 8-9). The natural ground was found to be 1.2m deep at either end. The south of the trench contained a 0.25m thick layer of firm mid-brownish grey clay (05) which contained a few small stones overlying a 0.22m thick layer of soft silty clay (06). This layer was coloured mid-reddish brown and contained small stones and three fragments of medieval pottery dating between the 12th to 16th century (Saway p14). Deposit (06) was found to overlay a 0.2m thick layer of angular pebbles and cobbles which measured 0.01-0.1m in size with an occasional larger stone measuring 0.3m. The stones were surrounded by a matrix of light blueish grey friable clay silt and the layer occupied 10m of the south-westerly end of the trench.



Figure 7: Trench 2 looking south-west.

The northern end of Trench 2 was contained a 0.12m thick layer of mid-greyish brown silty clay (08) similar to (05). This deposit overlay a 0.3m thick layer of angular stones (09) which measured 0.05-0.1m in size. The stones appeared to be frequently reddened and burnt and were surrounded by a matrix of dark greyish/blackish brown silty clay. This layer occupied 5m of the north-eastern end of the trench and a sondage was machined into it revealing another layer of stones below. Deposit (10) measured 0.18m thick and consisted of angular stones 0.05-0.1m in size that also occasionally appeared burnt. The stones were surrounded by a matrix of mid brownish yellow silty clay and the natural substratum was found beneath this.



Figure 8: Sondage dug into the south-western end of Trench 2.



Figure 9: Sondage dug into the north-eastern end of Trench 2.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was positioned on an east to west orientation over the southerly edge of the proposed development and was machined to a depth of 0.38-0.5m, slightly sloping to the west. The lower part of the subsoil was found to contain building rubble in the form of stone and roof slates and no other features were found within this trench.

The Post Roman Ceramic Finds - Deborah Sawday

The Ceramic Finds

The pottery assemblage was made up of twelve sherds, weighing 438grams, representing a maximum count of nine vessels and a vessel rim equivalent of 0.145 (calculated by adding together the circumference of the surviving rim sherds, where one vessel equals 1.00).

Table 2: The pottery fabrics.

Fabric	Common Name/Kiln & Fabric Equivalent where known	Approx. Date Range
CO1	Coventry fabric D (12), Warwick CTS SQ21/SQ211 (1)	c.1150-1250
LY1	Lyveden/Stanion type - Lyveden/Stanion 'B' ware, Northants CTS fabric 320 (2)	c.1200-1500
MS	Medieval Sandy ware– misc. coarse hard fired quartz tempered fabrics - ? Burley Hill, Ticknall, Derbyshire, Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire (3)	Early/mid 13th C.-1550+
MP2	Midland Purple ware 2 -? Ticknall, Derbyshire (3)	c.1375-1550
EA2	Earthenware 2 – 'Pancheon ware', Chilvers Coton/Ticknall, Derbyshire (4)	17th C-18th C. +
EA10	Fine White Earthenware/China	modern
(1) Redknap and Perry 1996, Soden & Ratkai 1998	(3) Coppack 1980, Soden & Ratkai 1998, Mayes and Scott 1984.	
(2) Northants CTS	(4) Sawday 1989, Gooder 1984	

Condition

The condition of the pottery was good with relatively little abrasion and an average sherd weight of 36.5 grams. Some sherds were co-joining.



Figure 10: Jar with frilled rim.

Methodology

The pottery was examined under an x20 binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to current guidelines (MPRG 1998, MPRG 2016) and the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999, Sawday 2009). The results are shown below (tables 2 and 3).

The Ceramic Record

The fabric codes and sources – where known – are shown in the fabric list, table 2. Table 3 catalogues the pottery by context, fabric, number, weight (grams), EVES and vessel count. Co-joining sherds are noted, whilst single sherds are generally counted as one vessel.

Two of the unstratified vessels in coarse sandy fabrics were of particular interest. A vessel with a frilled rim in an unclassified sandy ware (Fig. 10) is an uncommon find in the East Midlands, typologically the nearest parallel appears to be from kilns dating to the 14th or 15th centuries at Potterspurty in southern Northamptonshire, (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, fig.273.2070), but the coarse orange sandy fabric suggests a more likely origin to the west in Derbyshire. The other, one of the three joining sherds, also in a sandy fabric, was decorated with an applied strip of clay, covered with thin white slip and then finger impressed on lower body of pot (Fig. 11); the origins of this vessel are also uncertain. Applied stamped rosettes in white clay have been recorded at the pottery manufacturing centre at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton, in the later medieval fabric CC2, (Mayes and Scott 1984, fig.112,308-309) and it is possible that this fabric is a product of the kilns there. However, this kind of applied decoration is more commonly associated with late medieval Cistercian table wares, though it is very occasionally found on the contemporary Midland Purple cisterns or jars. Both wares were made at Chilvers Coton and also at Ticknall in Derbyshire (Spavold and Brown 2005). Nevertheless it is worth emphasising that this kind of decoration is not usually found as a linear strip around the lower wall of a vessel as here.



Figure 11: Vessel with applied decoration in white clay.

Conclusion

The pottery fabrics appear to be typical of the region; Coventry, Lyveden/Stanion, Chilvers Coton and Burley Hill and Ticknall were major centres of pottery production at this time. The presence of two vessels with no obvious typological parallels in terms of rim form or decoration within the region is of note. Both are interesting additions to the assemblage; although neither is indicative of any status or of particular trade links accruing to the site.

The medieval finds date from the mid or later 12th or 13th centuries to the later middle ages and are evidently associated with several phases of activity within the village during this period. The relatively high vessel rim equivalence of 0.145 for the assemblage as a whole, and large average sherd weight of 47.375 for the eight medieval sherds may suggest the presence of relatively undisturbed archaeological levels in the vicinity.

Table 3: The pottery by context, fabric/ware, sherd number, weight (grams), and EVES.

Context	Fabric/ware	No	Gr	EVEs	Vessel No	Comments
2	EA2	1	17	0.025	1	Jar rim, slipped and glazed internally, estimated EVE, later 17 th – 18 th C.
4	EA10	1	3		1	Transfer printed pale brown under glaze, early mid-19 th century.
6	LY1	2	74		1	Green glazed, convex base.

6	MP2	1	6		1	Body sherd
U/S sub soil	EA2	2	39		2	Internally slipped and glazed flat bases - jars or wide mouthed bowls/pancheons
U/S surface	MS	3	209		1	Hard fired partially oxidised joining sherds from the base on a thick walled vessel, possibly a jar. Applied strip of clay, covered with thin white slip and then finger impressed on lower body of pot. Underneath of base stood on sand prior to firing, roughly finished. Mixed coarse sandy inclusions up to 3-5mm, and rare Fe..
U/S surface	MS	1	84	0.12	1	Jar, coarse orange sandy ware with a frilled rim. ? Post depositional sooting. Rim diameter 230mm
U/S surface	CO1	1	6		1	Body – black sandy fabric - orange glaze.

Discussion and Conclusions

The two shallow gullies found in Trench 1 are likely to represent field boundaries dating to the post-medieval and modern periods. A recent east to west orientated field boundary was located several metres to the south of these gullies and this was removed before the evaluation commenced (P.Walker pers comms). The east to west orientated gullies in Trench 1 may therefore represent earlier boundaries.

The only archaeological deposits in the development area were found in Trench 2. The stones at the north-eastern end of Trench 2 comprised two layers, different to the layer of stones (07) in the north-eastern end of the trench.

The stones were angular with several reddened and possibly burnt and are unlikely to represent a surface - their appearance suggests that it is more likely that they represent hard-core or a foundation layer. Medieval pottery dating from the 12th century to the 16th was found within a deposit overlaying the stones at the south-west end of the trench, although it is possible that this pottery is residual.

Unstratified artefacts were also recovered from the site with post-medieval artefacts being found along with several examples of medieval pottery untypical for the area (Sawday p14). These fragments were found on the surface and could have been displaced by the modern made ground covering the north of the site.

Archive

The site archive consists of:

- X3 Trench recording sheets.
- X1 Context index
- X1 Photograph index
- X1 Drawing sheet index
- X1 Drawing Index
- X1 Drawing sheet
- X10 Context sheets
- X23 Digital photographs

The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A29.2017.

Publication

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

A summary of the work will also been submitted for publication in an appropriate local archaeological journal in due course.

Acknowledgments

ULAS would like to extend its thanks to the landowner for their cooperation during the work and also to Adam for operating the mechanical excavator.

The fieldwork was carried out by Richard Huxley and managed for ULAS by Vicki Score.

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ULAS, 2018. *Written Scheme of Investigation for Evaluation.: Land at Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire.*

Oasis Information

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1- 332102		
	Project Name	An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby, LE8 0QL		
	Start/end dates of field work	Start: 12-10-2018 End: 12-10-2018		
	Previous/Future Work	No/Not known		
	Project Type	Field evaluation		
	Site Status			
	Current Land Use			
	Monument Type/Period	Layers/ Medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery/medieval		
	Development Type	House construction		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning Condition		
	Planning Ref.	17/01732/FUL		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	LEICESTERSHIRE HARBOROUGH SMEETON WESTERBY Land at Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby		
	Study Area			
	Site Coordinates	SK 67734 93050		
	Height OD	115m OD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Vicki Score		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Richard Huxley		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Landowner		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient		LCC	LCC
	ID (Acc. No.)		XA109.2018	XA109.2018
	Contents		Photos	Notebook-Excavation

				Context sheet Drawing General Notes Photograph Plan Report Sectio
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