

**An Archaeological Excavation on land  
east of Little Lane,  
Desford,  
Leicestershire**

**NGR: SK 447797 303652**

**Adam Clapton**



**An Archaeological Excavation on land east of  
Little Lane,  
Desford,  
Leicestershire**

**SK 447797 303652**

**Adam Clapton**

**For: Mrs Kirkman**

Issue No	Checked by	Date	Reason for issue
2020-095 draft	G Speed	24/6/2020	Draft to client review
2020-095	G Speed	20/8/2020	Final issue

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

ULAS Report Number 2020-095

©2020

Accession Number-X.A39.2020

## OASIS RECORD

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1-397144		
	<b>Project Name</b>	An Archaeological Excavation on land east of Little Lane, Desford, Leicestershire, LE9 9GP		
	<b>Start/end dates</b>	16/06/2020-17/06/2020		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	Evaluation/not known		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Targeted trenches		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Orchard		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	Pit medieval, gully medieval, ditch post-medieval		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	Pottery, glass		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Planning condition		
<b>Planning Ref.</b>	18/00976/FUL			
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>County</b>	Leicestershire		
	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Little Lane, Desford, Leicestershire, LE9 9GP		
	<b>Study Area</b>	0.25 Hectares		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK 447797 303652		
	<b>Height OD</b>	125m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Local Planning Authority		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Gavin Speed		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Adam Clapton		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Mrs Kirkman		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>	X.A39.2020	X.A39.2020	X.A39.2020
	<b>Contents</b>	Pottery, glass	Photographs	Context sheet, drawings, photograph, plan, section, unpublished text
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	<b>Description</b>	Developer Report A4 pdf		
	<b>Title</b>	An Archaeological Excavation on land east of Little Lane, Desford, Leicestershire,		
	<b>Author</b>	Adam Clapton		
	<b>Other bibliographic details</b>	ULAS Report No 2020-095		
	<b>Date</b>	2020		
	<b>Publisher/Place</b>	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		

## Contents

Summary .....	1
Introduction.....	1
Site Description, Topography and Geology.....	2
Historical and Archaeological Background .....	4
Historical Background .....	4
Archaeological Background.....	4
Evaluation Results .....	5
Aims and Objectives .....	6
Research Objectives.....	6
Methodology .....	7
Results.....	8
Medieval and post-medieval pottery and glass .....	12
Discussion and Conclusion .....	13
Archive and Publication.....	14
References.....	15
Acknowledgements.....	15

## Figures

Figure 1: Site Location, within UK, county, and local. ....	2
Figure 2: Plan of development (provided by client). ....	3
Figure 3: Development area looking north east, prior to excavation.....	3
Figure 4: Evaluation trench plan (from McLeish 2020, Figure 4).....	5
Figure 5: Plan and section of pit found in Trench 1 (from McLeish 2020, Figure 5). ....	6
Figure 6: Development footprint (red dashed) excavation area (blue) and evaluation trenches (grey).....	7
Figure 7: Overall plan showing excavation area (dark blue) development footprint (light blue) and archaeological features (coral and black).....	9
Figure 8: Feature sections. ....	9
Figure 9: Pit [101] fully excavated looking north-east (1m scale). ....	10
Figure 10: Pit feature [103] looking south-east (0.5m scale).....	11
Figure 11: Gully [105] looking north-west (1m and 0.3m scales).....	11
Figure 12: Cuts [107] and [109] looking north-east (1m scale).....	12
Figure 13: Pottery from (102), (106) and (110).....	13
Figure 14: Plan showing possible earlier field boundary ditch (Coral) running parallel with Little Lane (grey). ....	14

## An Archaeological Excavation on land east of Little Lane, Desford, Leicestershire

SK 447797 303652

*Adam Clapton*

### Summary

*This document is a fieldwork report for an archaeological excavation, carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land east of Little Lane, Desford, Leicestershire (SK 447797 303652) in advance of a residential dwelling and access by Mrs Kirkman (18/00976/FUL).*

*The proposed development area comprises a former orchard, of 0.25ha, on the edge of the village 200m north-west of the historic village core. The south-west and north-east boundaries border existing residential properties. Land to the west and east of the site is predominantly pastoral farmland.*

*A trial trench evaluation (by ULAS) had highlighted the presence of a medieval pit within the development area. Further excavation centred on the pit recorded during trial trenching revealed three further features. These consisted of a small gully containing medieval pottery, a large shallow ditch feature containing late 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century pottery, and an undated pit, most likely representing a tree throw.*

*The archive for the site will be deposited with Leicestershire County Museums with accession number X.A39.2020.*

### Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Section 16 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* (MHCLG 2019) this document forms the report for an archaeological excavation on land east of Little Lane, Desford, Leicestershire (Figure 1). It details the programme of archaeological excavation that was undertaken in June 2020 and follows the strategy of work set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (Speed 2020).

Planning permission has been obtained for a single residential dwelling and access (18/00976/FUL) (Figure 2), the archaeological work was required to discharge condition 3 (archaeology, 20/00274/DISCON) imposed on the planning permission, which includes a condition for archaeological work.

The site had been subject to an archaeological evaluation (McLeish 2020) that provided a preliminary indication of the character of the heritage assets present. This allowed an assessment of the potential impact of the development on the remains to be assessed by the Planning Authority. A single pit containing medieval pottery was uncovered during the evaluation.

As a consequence of this the Planning Archaeologist recommended mitigation by excavation and recording (preservation by record) of the development footprint centred on the pit (containing medieval pottery) uncovered during the evaluation.

## Site Description, Topography and Geology

Desford is a village and civil parish in Hinckley and Bosworth district, 7 miles west of the centre of Leicester. The site is located on the edge of the village, 200m north-west of the historic village core. It consists of a broadly square area of mature trees and shrubs with an extension following Little Lane as far as Newbold Road. The south-west and north-east boundaries border existing residential properties. Land to the west and east of the site is predominantly pastoral farmland (Figure 3).

The site covers around a quarter of a hectare of flat ground at a height of 125m above OD. The British Geological Survey website indicates the underlying geology as consisting of Edwalton Member-Mudstone. This is overlain by Sand and Gravel Glaciofluvial Deposits.

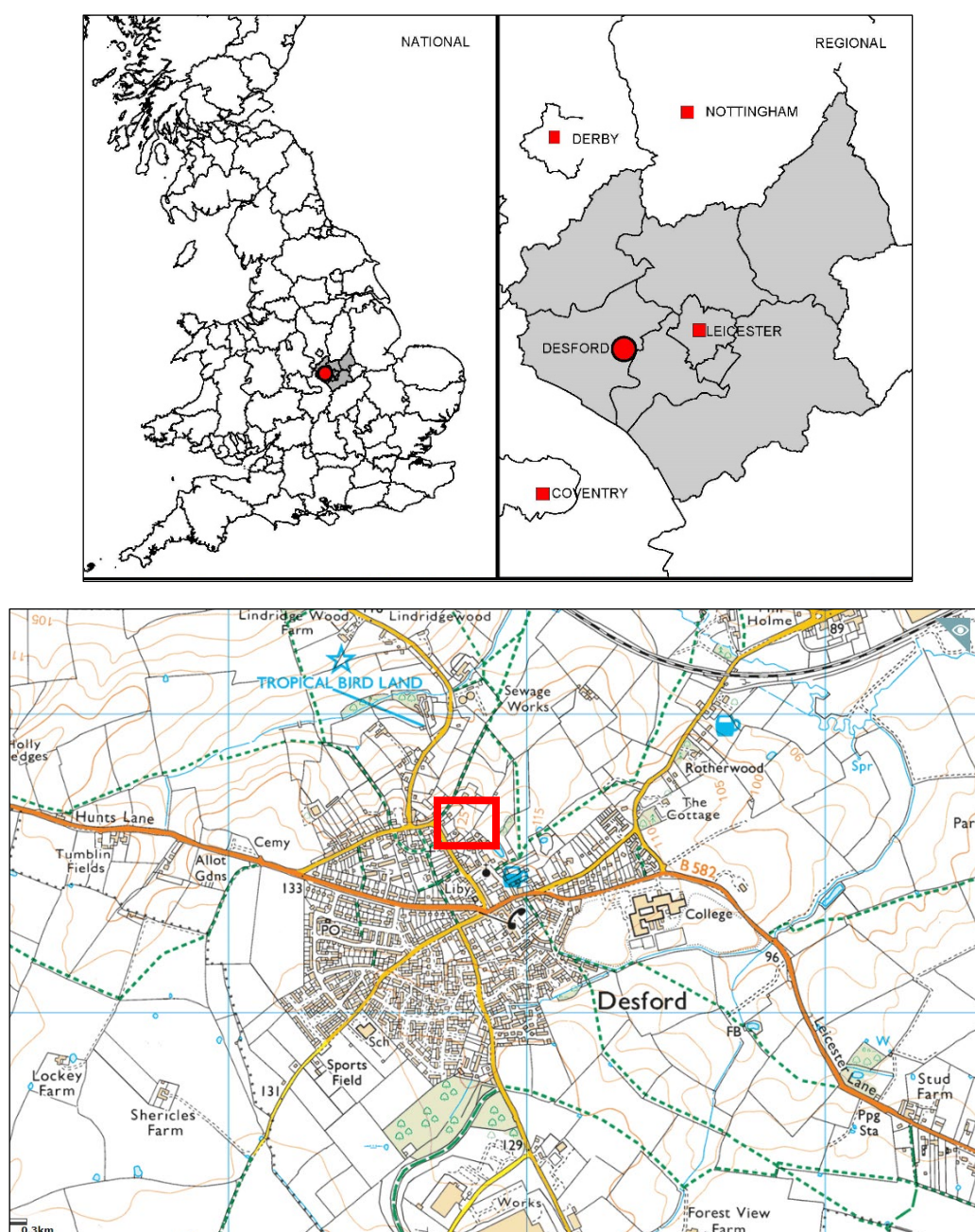


Figure 1: Site Location, within UK, county, and local.  
Contains OS data © Crown copyright [and database right] 2019

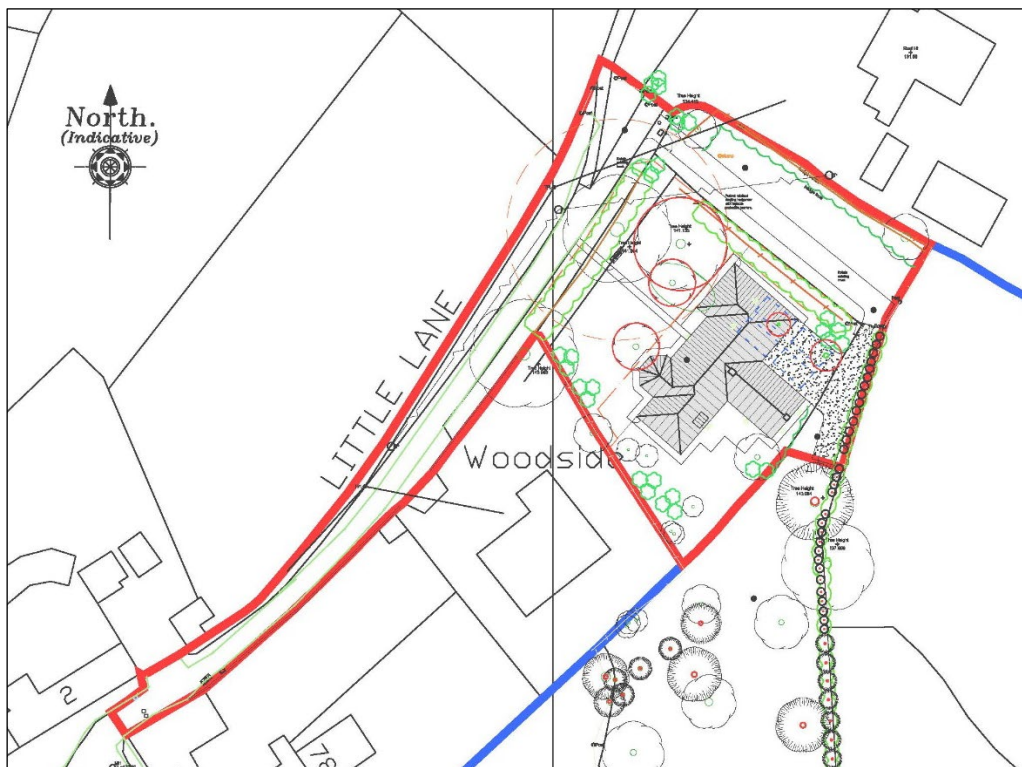


Figure 2: Plan of development (provided by client).



Figure 3: Development area looking north east, prior to excavation.

## Historical and Archaeological Background

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland indicated prior to the 2020 evaluation that there were no known archaeological remains recorded on the assessment area itself. The HER recorded some activity within the surrounding area.

### *Historical Background*

Desford is recorded in the Domesday Book as Deresford and is noted as having one villager. It would seem likely that a ford was once to be found in the vicinity although the nearest watercourse is a tributary of the Rothley Brook and is 500m to the south-east of the village centre. The site is located 200m to the north of the historic village core (**MLE2751**) and beyond the anticipated former extent of the medieval and post-medieval village. The area north of the church is called 'Castlehill' on the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Survey map. The name 'Castle Hill' was noted during research although no earthworks were visible when the area was checked (**MLE2736**).

### *Archaeological Background*

An undated quern has been recorded as being in the possession of the owner of a property immediately adjacent to the site. Querns tend not to travel far, consequently they are a good indicator of activity in the area (**MLE8292**). Trial trenching carried out in 1999 near Old Manor Farm, 250m south-east of the site, found a Bronze Age thumbnail scraper and piercer. Trial trenching on land off Leicester Road in 1999, 300m south-east of the site, recorded evidence of Iron Age/Roman activity. Pits, ditches and structural activity. Finds included several sherds of 1st BC/AD pottery. Most of the features were Romano-British including a possible corn drying oven with good organic preservation. A substantial ditch, which may enclose most of the features, was located (Thomas 2000). Later in 1999, 13 more trenches were excavated. This was followed by area excavation. This showed further evidence of late Iron Age and early Roman occupation. The large enclosure is thought to date from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC/AD. A single pit was revealed within the enclosure, which remained undated. The features surrounding the enclosure included scattered post-holes indicating the vestiges of uninterpretable structures, pits and gullies that provided evidence of localised domestic activity. Later activity (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD) on a smaller scale continued after the enclosure went out of use. Evidence of metalworking was found and a collection of roofing tile suggests stone building nearby. A well was inserted into the backfilled enclosure ditch, probably in the late Roman period (Thomas 2000). In 1960 a kiln was found, 200m south of the site, during building work. A second kiln was found 45m to the south-west. Trial trenching in 2013 found three pieces of Roman pottery but no further kiln features.

Desford's historic core is believed to have its origins in the late Saxon period and to have been occupied throughout the medieval period (**MLE2751**). The evidence suggests that the site was situated away from any settlement activity; comprising part of Desford's agricultural hinterland. Trial trenching carried out in 2013 on Main Street, 200m south of the site, found a number of features including a pit, gully and posthole. The associated pottery assemblage provided a date range of 850-1539 AD. Another evaluation, also on Main Street, carried out by ULAS in October 2019, 150m south of the proposed development area, revealed a single undated pit and an undated post-hole. Another pit was found to contain medieval pottery dated 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century.



Settlement in Desford during the post-medieval and modern period expanded somewhat around the historic core to the south of the Site. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map shows that the site still lay outside the settlement area, forming part of a large field (field parcel no 272). Trees are illustrated along the southern and western border, along with former field boundaries. The 1930 OS map shows the area covered in trees and a fence erected along the line of the currant borders. By 1950 a bungalow was built in the southern part of the site ('Woodside'). The site appears to have remained largely unchanged since this time.

### ***Evaluation Results***

An evaluation carried out by ULAS in April 2020 demonstrated the presence of archaeological remains in Trench 1 (McLeish 2020, Figures 4 and 5). A single shallow pit was located at the south-west end of Trench 1. Five sherds of very abraded medieval cooking pot (Potters Marston Ware 1100-1300) were recovered from the pit fill.

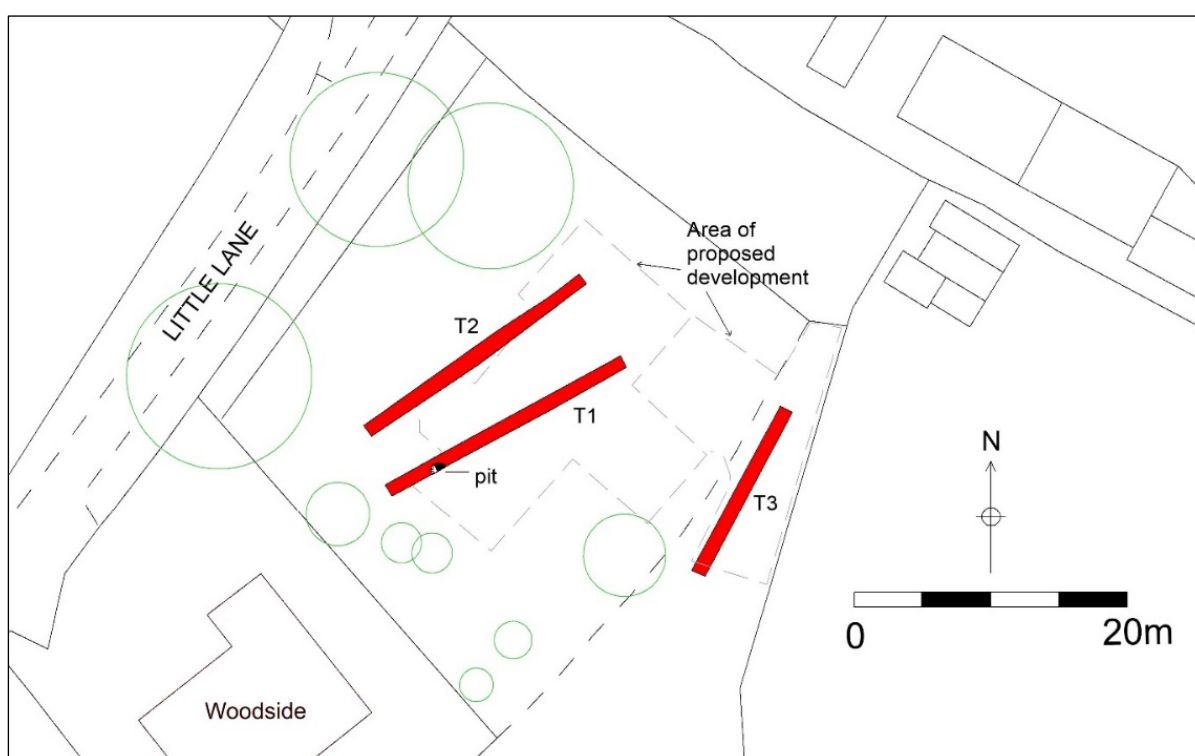


Figure 4: Evaluation trench plan (from McLeish 2020, Figure 4).

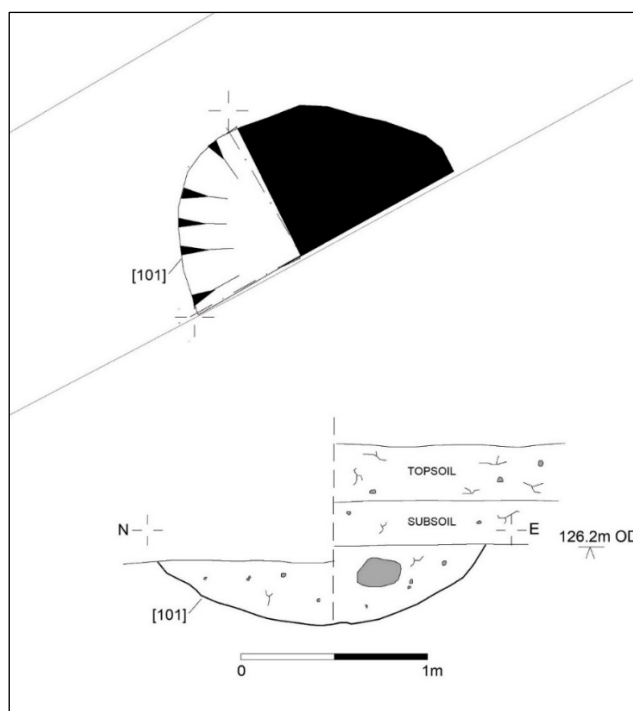


Figure 5: Plan and section of pit found in Trench 1 (from McLeish 2020, Figure 5).

## 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.

## Research Objectives

The previous evaluation shows survival of a pit containing early medieval pottery, indicating the potential for further similar surviving evidence in the area. On this basis it is possible to determine some initial objectives identified within *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda*, *Leicester Archaeology Monograph 13*, (ed. Cooper 2006), and *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (ed. Knight et al 2012), and updated here: <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/researchframeworks/eastmidlands/wiki/>

- *Late Bronze Age and Iron Age*: 4.1-4.10 (dating, add to knowledge of regional styles of pottery), site visibility; prospection and landscape exploration; settlements; field systems

and major linear boundaries; ritual and structured deposition, agricultural economy and landscape; finds, craft, industry; social relations and society)

- *High Medieval*: 7.2, 7.7 (rural settlement; agrarian landscape).
- *Post-Medieval*: 8.3 (agricultural landscapes and the food-producing economy).

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 (2020b) and adhered to their Code of Conduct (2020a). The archaeological work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological evaluation prepared by ULAS (Speed 2020) and agreed with the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist (May 2020). The work was monitored by the client (Mrs Kirkman) and the Leicestershire County Council Senior Planning Archaeologist (R. Clark). An accession number (X.A39.2020) was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts.

The excavation area began on the archaeological feature containing medieval pottery, from evaluation Trench 1 (in the south-western corner of the footprint of the proposed new build). Due to the presence of additional archaeological features, further soil stripping within the proposed development footprint was undertaken, where site constraints allowed. The presence of mature trees, hedges and active beehives meant the entire footprint could not be soil stripped (Figure 6)

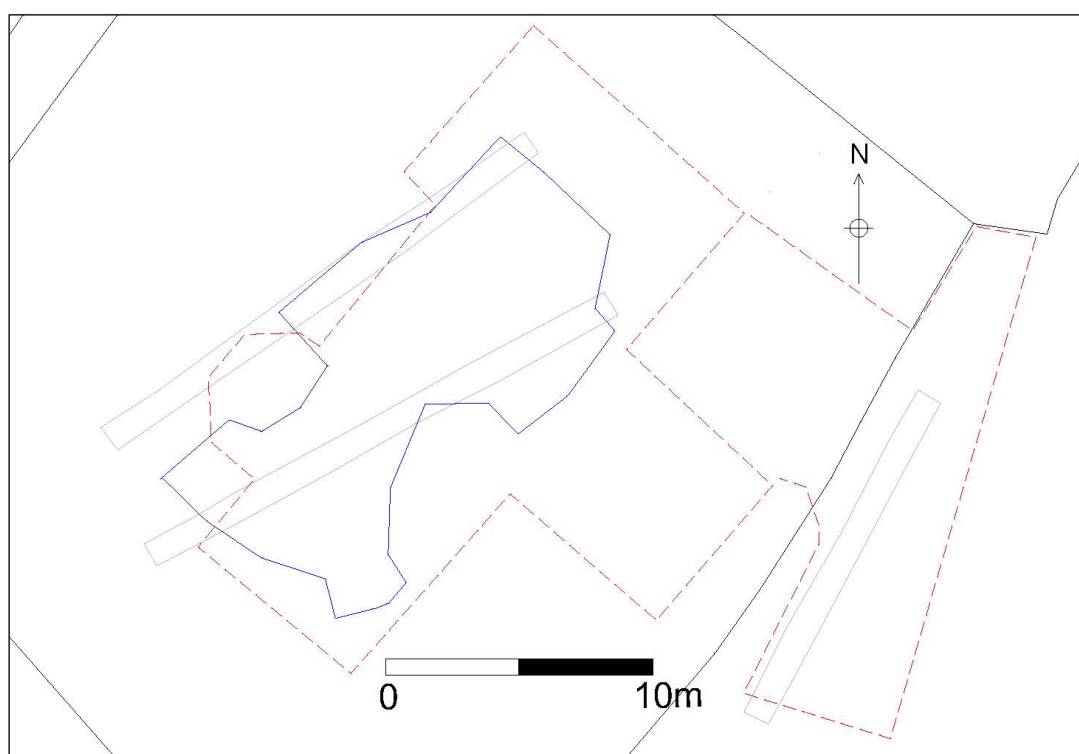


Figure 6: Development footprint (red dashed) excavation area (blue) and evaluation trenches (grey).

Excavation was carried out using an 8-ton tracked machine fitted with a flat bladed 1.6m wide bucket. Overburden was removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision with topsoil and subsoil stored separately. The area was excavated down to the top of the natural substratum.

The ULAS recording manual was used as a guide for all recording. Individual descriptions of archaeological strata were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets.

The excavated area was recorded by an appropriate method and was tied into 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 and their location and context. The primary photographic record was by digital camera and the record also included overall site and working shots' which illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

After completion of the excavation and with agreement of the Planning Archaeologist, the excavated area was left to be reinstated at the client's convenience.

## **Results**

The topsoil mirrored that seen in the evaluation and consisted of a dark brownish black loose loam (development area is a former orchard) with abundant sub-rounded gravel inclusions and common fragments of brick and 20th century pottery. The subsoil also mirrored that seen in the evaluation phase and consisted of a mid-orangish brown silty clay with common sub-rounded pebbles and charcoal flecks, this was also heavily disturbed by rooting from the trees in the orchard. The natural substratum consisted of a mid pinkish red clay with patches of yellow sandy clay, with common sub rounded pebble inclusions.

In addition to the pit identified during the evaluation phase, a further three features were identified during the excavation (Figures 7 and 8). These consisted of a small gully, a ditch and a possible pit or tree throw. The pit identified during the evaluation was also fully excavated.

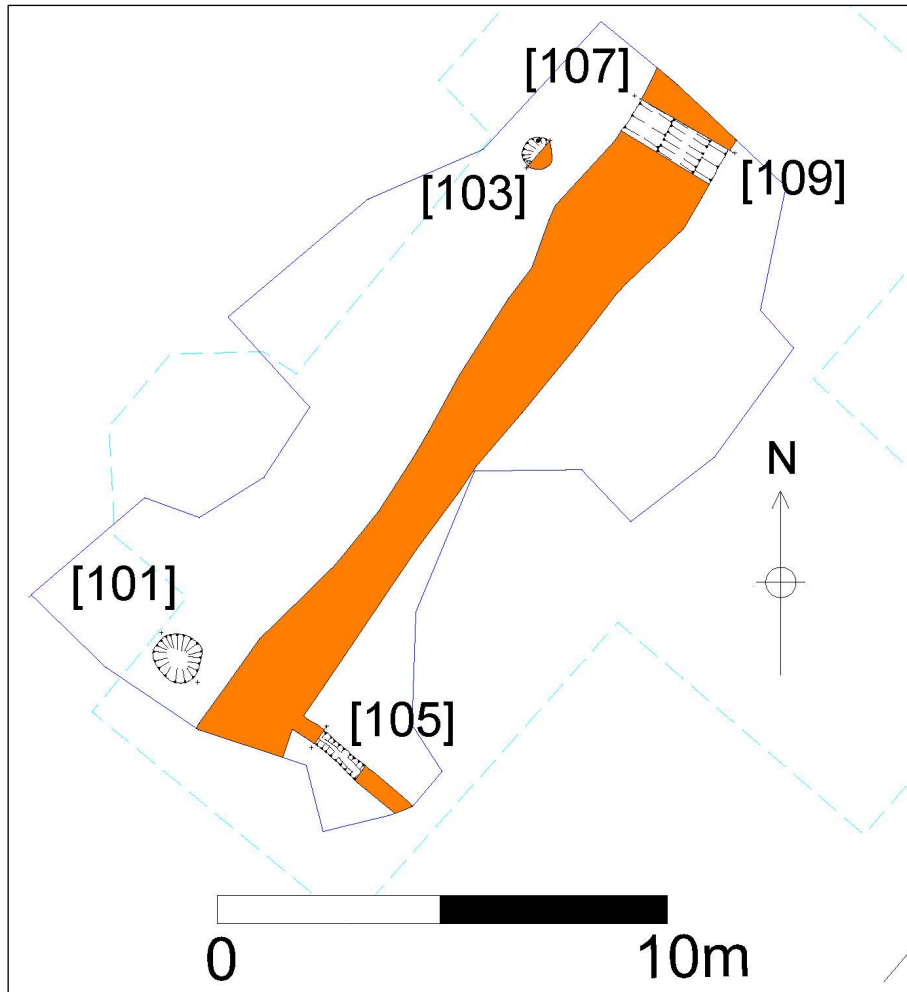


Figure 7: Overall plan showing excavation area (dark blue) development footprint (light blue) and archaeological features (coral and black).

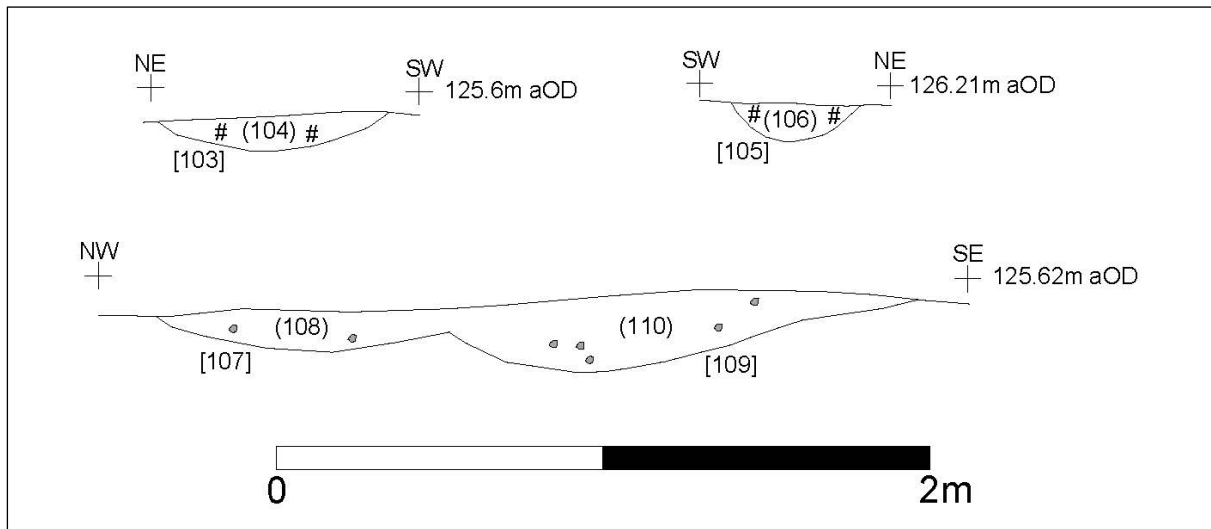


Figure 8: Feature sections.

Pit [101], partly dug during the evaluation phase was fully exposed and excavated (Figure 9). It measured 1.1m in length, 1m in width and 0.35m in depth with moderately sloping concave sides breaking to a concave base. The fill (102) consisted of a mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional sub rounded pebble inclusions and charcoal flecks. A further sherd of medieval pottery was recovered, comparable to sherds recovered during the evaluation.

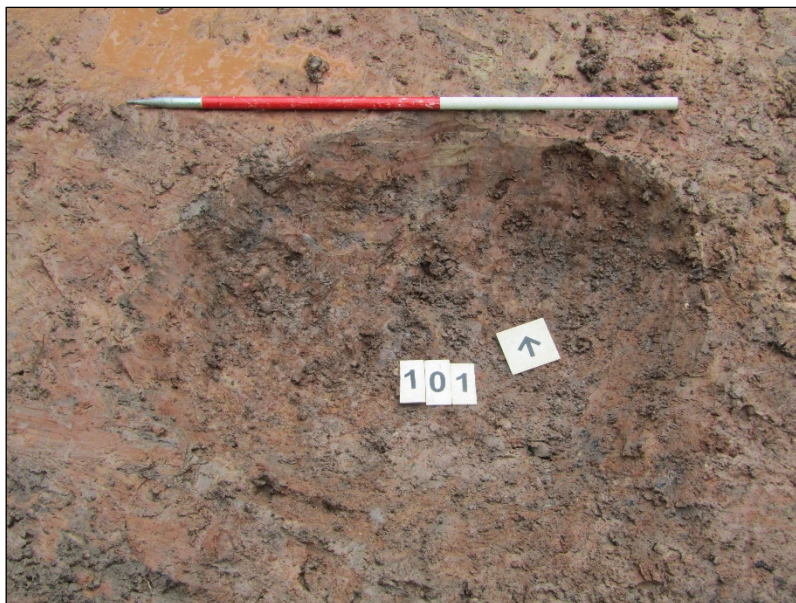


Figure 9: Pit [101] fully excavated looking north-east (1m scale).

A further pit feature [103] was seen in the north corner of the excavation area (Figure 10). It was sub circular in plan and measured 0.7m in length, 0.63m in width and 0.1m in depth. It had shallow concave sides braking to an irregular base. The fill (104) contained a loose brownish grey silty loam with occasional charcoal flecks and abundant root disturbance. No finds were recovered. The loose, loamy nature of the fill along with evidence of root disturbance suggests this feature was most likely a tree throw.



Figure 10: Pit feature [103] looking south-east (0.5m scale).

A gully feature [105] was seen in the south of the excavation area, running south-east to north-west, extending beyond the excavation area to the south-east and truncated by a large linear to the north-west (Figure 11). A single excavated section revealed a 'V'-shaped profile measuring 0.37m in width, 0.12m in depth with moderately sloping concave sides breaking to a narrow concave base. It contained a single fill (106) consisting of a firm mid brownish grey silty clay with occasional small sub rounded pebble inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks. A single sherd of pottery was recovered dating to AD1100-1300.



Figure 11: Gully [105] looking north-west (1m and 0.3m scales).

A wide shallow ditch feature [107] [109] was seen running north-east to south west across the excavation area, continuing beyond its limits to the north-east and south-west (Figure 12). Two cuts were recorded but no relationship was visible. Cut [107] measured 0.84m in width and 0.11m in depth with shallow sloping concave sides breaking to a flat base. The fill (108) consisted of a mid-orangish brown silty clay with occasional pebble and charcoal inclusions. Cut [109] was slightly larger, measuring 1.4m in width and 0.24m in depth with straight moderately sloping sides breaking to a concave base. The fill (110) was the same as fill (108). Five sherds of 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery, and part of a wine glass base of the same date were recovered from fill (110).



Figure 12: Cuts [107] and [109] looking north-east (1m scale).

## Medieval and post-medieval pottery and glass

*Nicholas J. Cooper*

### Introduction

In addition to the five sherds of medieval pottery recovered during the evaluation, a small assemblage of two sherds of medieval pottery, five post-medieval or modern sherds and one fragment of glass were recovered from three contexts during the excavation.

### Methodology

The pottery was analysed by form and fabric in accordance with national guidelines (Barclay *et al.* 2016), using the Leicestershire County Museums medieval and post-medieval pottery fabric series, and quantified by sherd count and weight (g).

### Analysis

In addition to the five sherds (45g) from a Potters Marston medieval cooking pot (Leics. Fabric PM) recovered from Pit fill [101] (102) during the evaluation, a further sherd (15g) from the same vessel was recovered during the full excavation of the pit, dating to AD1100-1300 (Figure 13, left).



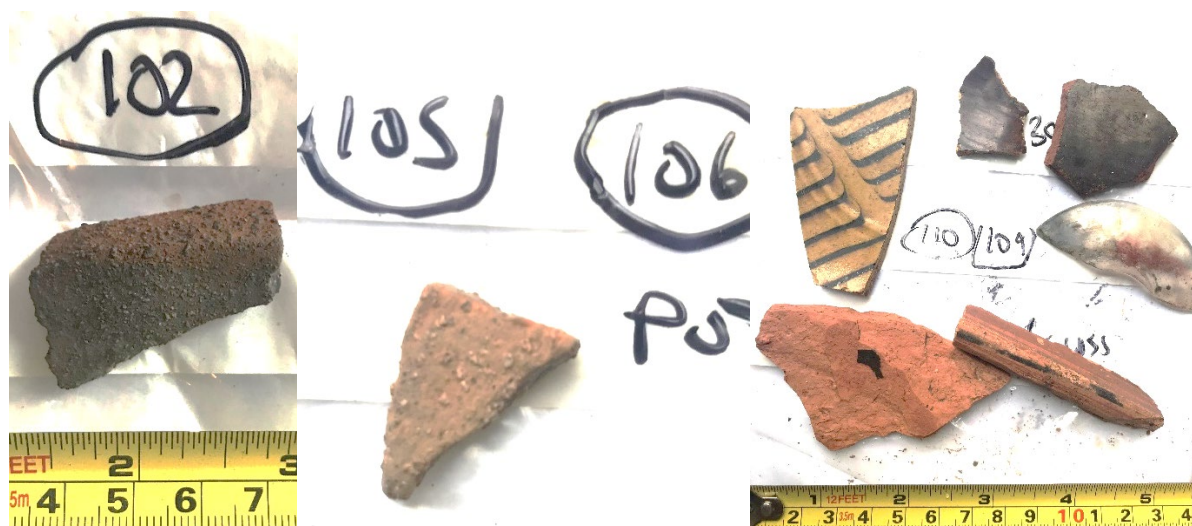


Figure 13: Pottery from (102), (106) and (110).

Small gully [105] (106) contained a further sherd (3g) of Potters Marston medieval cooking pot, again dating AD1100-1300 (Figure 13, centre).

A shallow ditch [109] (110), which truncated gully [105], contained one sherd from a Staffordshire slipware plate (20g) (Fabric EA7), two sherds (15g) of Midland Black ware (EA6) and two sherds (30g) of post-medieval earthenware (pancheon ware) (EA1) (Figure 13, right). In addition the base of a wine glass was also recovered. The date range for these wares suggests deposition of the group during the 18th or early 19th century.

### Finds Discussion

Pit (102) and gully (106) would appear to be broadly contemporary as both contain vessels from nearby Potters Marston, to the southwest of Leicester, which was the major producer for the town and surrounding countryside between AD 1100 and 1300. Truncation of [105] (106) by [109] took place about 500 years later as it contains the earthenware products of regional centres such as Ticknall or Chilvers Coton and possibly Stoke on Trent during the 18th or early 19th century.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The proposed development area on land at Little Lane, Desford, Leicestershire had some potential for undisturbed archaeological remains to be present. The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland had identified known archaeological and historical sites surrounding the development area and a subsequent trial trench evaluation by ULAS had identified a pit containing 5 sherds of medieval pottery within the development area.

Where site constraints allowed, the footprint of the proposed development was consequently soil stripped focusing on the pit identified during the evaluation. In addition to the original pit, a further two archaeological features were identified during the excavation. These consisted of a gully containing a single sherd of medieval pottery, a large shallow ditch which contained late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery, and a pit, which most likely represented a tree throw feature.

The large shallow ditch ran parallel to Little Lane, and the shallow gully at a right-angle to it. These likely represent earlier field boundaries, pre-dating the earliest maps of the area from the late 1800s, of likely medieval and/or post-medieval date (Figure 14).

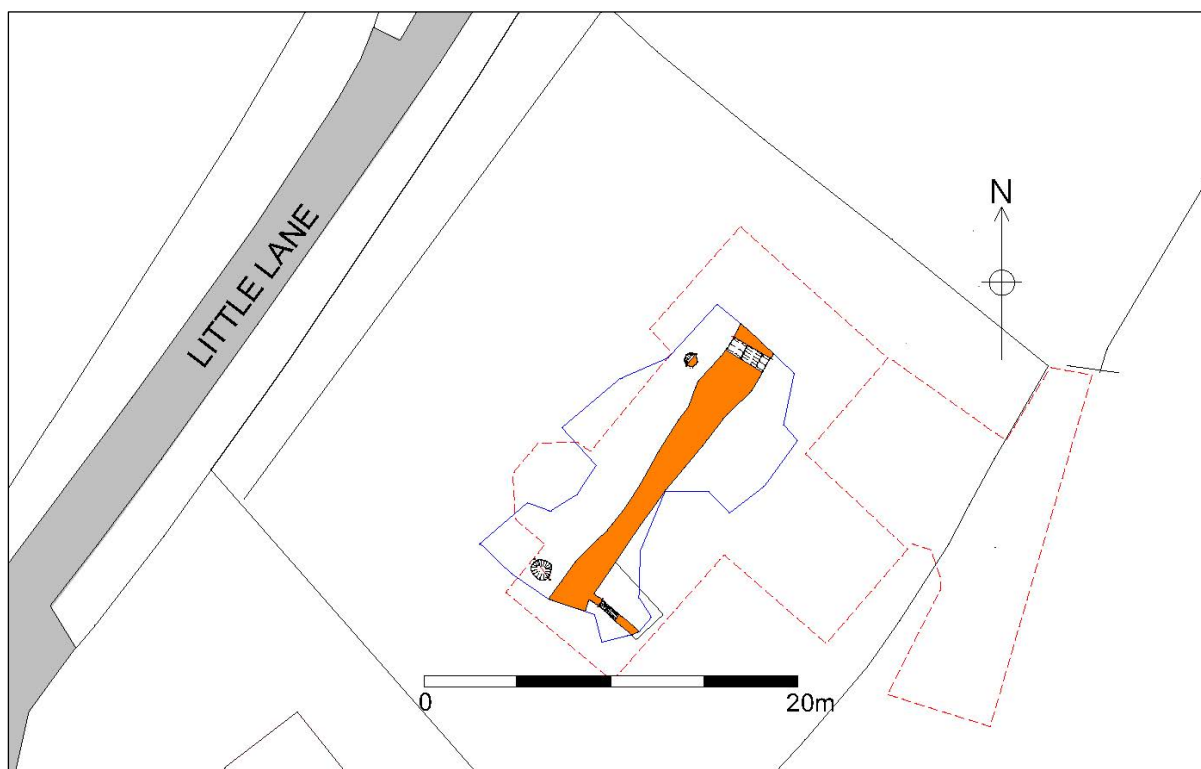


Figure 14: Plan showing possible earlier field boundary ditch (Coral) running parallel with Little Lane (grey).

### Archive and Publication

The archive for this phase will be deposited with Leicestershire County Museums with accession number X.A39.2020, and consists of the following:

- 1 unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2020-095)
- 1 unbound copy of the WSI
- 1 context index sheet
- 8 context record sheets
- 1 drawing record sheet
- 1 A2 permatrace sheet of plans and section drawings
- 1 photo index sheet
- 1 colour photo contact sheet of digital photographs
- 1 CD containing a copy of this report and the digital photographs
- 1 finds checklist and accompanying finds (medieval and post-medieval pottery, glass).

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

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

## References

- Barclay, A., Booth, P., Brown, D.H., Evans, J., Knight, D., and Wood, I., 2016 *The Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology*. PCRG, SGRP, MPRG.
- CifA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2020a, *Code of Conduct*.
- CifA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2020b, *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation*.
- Cooper, N. (Ed.) (2006). *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda*. Leicester Archaeological Monographs No. 13. University of Leicester Archaeological Services: Leicester.
- McLeish, A., 2020 *An Archaeological Evaluation on Land East of Little Lane, Desford, Leicestershire*. ULAS Report: 2020-065.
- MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) 2019 (Rev.), *National Planning Policy Framework*.
- Speed, G., 2020 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Excavation, Land East of Little Lane, Desford, Leicestershire*. ULAS WSI 20-418.
- Thomas, J., 2000 *An archaeological excavation on land off Leicester Lane, Desford*. ULAS Report: 2000-044.

## Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Mrs Kirkman for her help and cooperation with this project. Adam Clapton carried out the excavation for ULAS, and the project was managed by Dr Gavin Speed.

Adam Clapton  
ULAS  
University of Leicester  
University Road  
Leicester LE1 7RH  
Tel: 0116 252 2848  
Fax: 0116 252 2614  
Email: ac562@le.ac.uk

24/06/2020



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**

**Archaeological Services**

University of Leicester  
University Road  
Leicester LE1 7RH  
UK

Directors

**Dr Richard Buckley** OBE BA PhD FSA MCifA

**e:** rjb16@le.ac.uk

**t:** +44 (0)116 252 2848

**f:** +44 (0)116 252 2614

**e:** ulas@le.ac.uk

