

An Archaeological Evaluation at the Nubrook House,
Brook Lane, Great Easton, Leicestershire

NGR: SP 84654 93034

Nathan Flavell



Site Name: Nubrook House, Brook Lane, Great Easton

Grid Ref: SP 84654 93034

Author: Nathan Flavell

Client: The Environment Partnership

Planning Ref. 19/00068/FUL

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University of Leicester, Archaeological Services,
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848
www.le.ac.uk/ulas

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OASIS RECORD

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1- 407654		
	Project Name	Nubrook House, Brook Lane, Great Easton		
	Start/end dates	27/10/2020 – 28/10/2020		
	Previous/Future Work	Unknown		
	Project Type	Evaluation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Garden		
	Monument Type/Period	Ditch – unknown, wall – post-medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery – post-medieval, clay pipe		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
Planning Ref.	19/00068/FUL			
PROJECT LOCATION	County	Leicestershire		
	Site Address/Postcode	Nubrook House Brook Lane, Great Easton, Leicestershire LE16 8SJ		
	Study Area	730 square metres		
	Site Coordinates	SP 84654 93034		
	Height OD	59m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (Harborough Borough Council)		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Gavin Speed		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Nathan Flavell		
Sponsor/Funding Body	The Environment Partnership			
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service
	ID (Acc. No.)	X.A94.2020	X.A94.2020	X.A94.2020
	Contents	Pottery, clay pipe, flint, tile	Photographs	Report, Trial trench sheets, context sheets, drawing index, drawing record, photo index., A3 permatrace sheet
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services at Nubrook House, Brook Lane, Great Easton, Leicestershire (SP 84654 93034), to provide preliminary indication of any heritage assets.

The two trenches revealed a small amount of archaeology, including a ditch or pit, and an early post-medieval rough alignment of stones, and a number of pottery sherds dating from the 18-19th centuries located in the subsoil.

The archive for the work will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A94.2020.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in the garden of Nubrook House, Brook Lane, Great Easton, Leicestershire B78 1DY (NGR: SP 84654 93034) (Fig. 1).

The village of Great Easton is located in South Eastern Leicestershire and lies in a rural location between Market Harborough and Uppingham (Figure 1). The site sits in the Great Easton conservation area.

Planning permission is granted for erection of a dwelling and garage (19/00068/FUL). Within the conditions, Condition 11 is to carry out archaeological work consisting initially of an archaeological evaluation, in order to inform the planning authority on the presence/absence of archaeological deposits, and the requirement for any further archaeological work as mitigation of likely damage or loss of archaeology caused by such a development

Site Location, Geology and Topography

The site is *c.* 730m², consisting of the east half of the large garden of Nubrook House, containing numerous large trees. The site is bounded to the east by residential properties and with Nubrook House to the west. To the north is a paddock, and the southern boundary is formed by Brook Lane (Fig. 2).

The British Geological Survey of England and Wales indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of superficial deposits of Quaternary sands and gravel deposits, overlying bedrock deposits of Charmouth mudstone (BGS 2009).

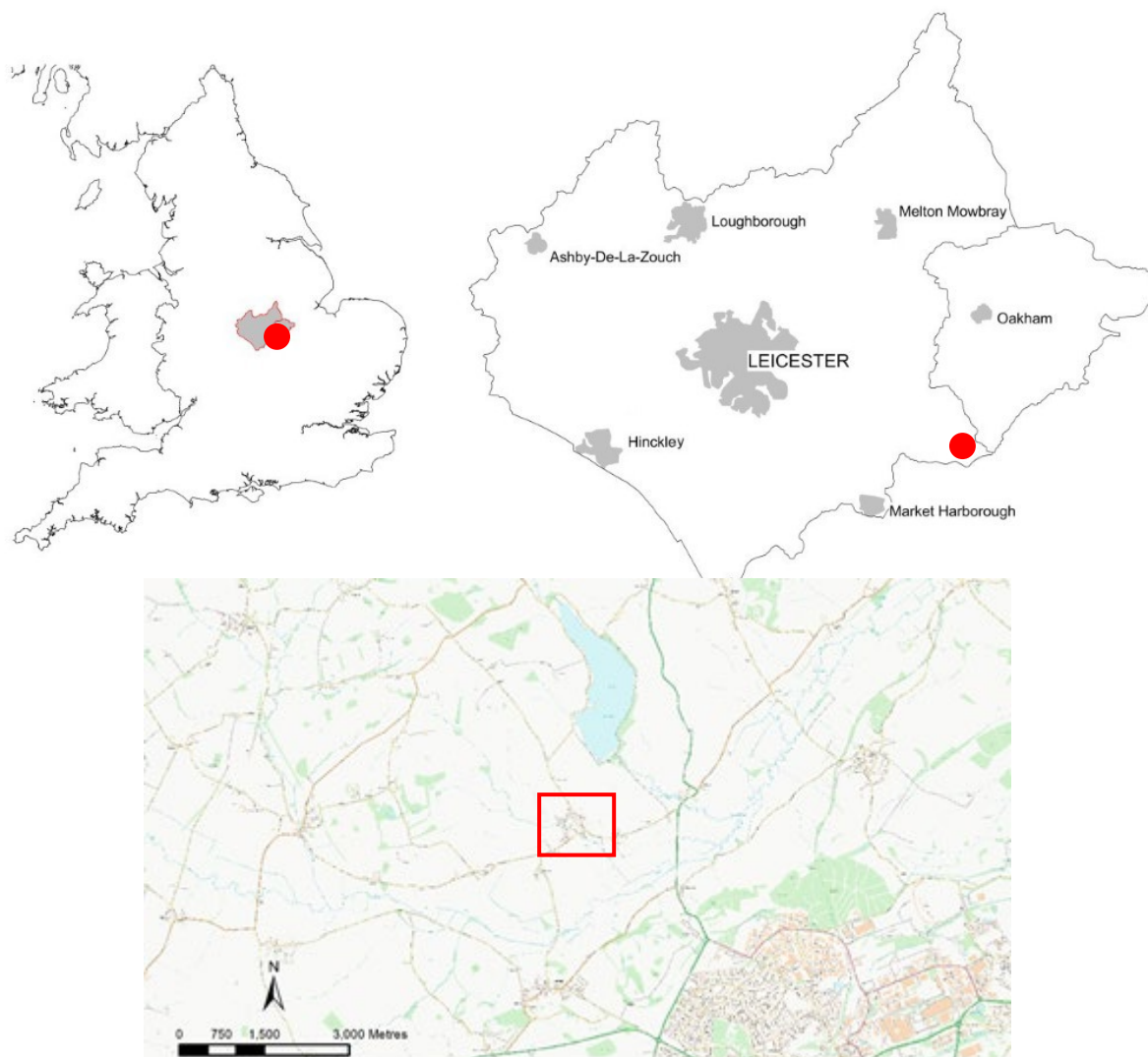


Figure 1: Site location

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Historical and Archaeological Background

The site lies within the Great Easton Conservation Area, in close proximity to a number of Listed Buildings, and within the Historic settlement core of Great Easton (**MLE9719**). It is adjacent to known medieval remains from Back Field (**MLE16784**), and 24 Brook Lane, a Grade II listed building (**DLE4365**).

Archaeological Background

The village has early origins and is mentioned in the Domesday Book as Easton in the Gartree Hundred; the Abbey of Peterborough held 12 curacates of land there and there is also mention of woodland and 30 acres of meadow. Traditionally the manor was held to have been given to the abbey by Ethelred of Mercia around AD700. Domesday however has it as a gift by Earl Ralf of Hereford. (Morris 1977). Much of the village remained the property of the church and the manor was leased at times to Rockingham Castle; a recently discovered boundary stone is thought to depict Rockingham castle at around the 11th - 12th century. Herringbone masonry

in the west wall of the church has been suggested as evidence for a Norman church here. Burials only started in the village during the Black Death when the Church had to undergo special consecration by the Bishop of Lincoln to accept the burials of plague victims – all previous burials had been in the neighbouring mother parish of Bringhurst. Although originally intended to be temporary the churchyard continued as permanent. Pevsner mentions two village greens – one south of the church and another south of that. He also states that ‘the best houses are in the High Street’. The name given to the open space south of the church is ‘Cross Bank’ suggesting that a cross once stood here, possibly a Market Cross indicating a market place (Pevsner 1984).

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland indicates that there are no known archaeological sites within the assessment area, however there are known archaeological sites in the area from prehistoric, Roman and Medieval sites in the vicinity of the Site.

Prehistoric

The active fieldwalking in the area has produced the identification of numerous prehistoric flint scatters in the fields around the village. A Neolithic axe has been found within the village. North of the village a fragment of a Bronze Age rapier blade was recovered, and a mid-Bronze Age side-looped spearhead was found to the east. Iron Age finds in the area include pottery from Lounts Crescent, Bringhurst cemetery, a brooch. Prehistoric ditches and features suggesting occupation have also been recorded in the area and especially to the south-west of the two sites. A Bronze Age ring ditch cropmark was identified to the south.

Roman

There is a Roman villa recorded east of the church at Bringhurst (south of the village) found during fieldwalking. To the north is an extensive scatter of late Roman pottery suggesting occupation. Metal detecting recovered seven late Roman coins and copper alloy fragments along with a scatter of iron slag. This, associated with the Roman pottery, might suggest a metalworking centre. Pottery was also found to the south-west of the church at Bringhurst. Roman material has also been found within the village itself. Pottery and coins were found during building work in Lount’s Crescent in 1951, and Roman pottery was recovered from around Rectory farm, Broadgate, Moulds Lane, Dove Cottage, Brook Lane, and St Andrew’s Church. Roman pottery has also been found in Bringhurst. A Roman road north of the village runs from Ermine Street to King’s Cliff in Northamptonshire and is thought likely to continue onto the small town at Medbourne although the projected route is uncertain.

Anglo-Saxon

A number of Anglo Saxon pottery sherds have been found in and around the village. Anglo Saxon pottery has also been found in the cemetery and around the village of Bringhurst. Documentary evidence suggests that the 13th century St. Nicholas’ church has possible Saxon origins and there is also evidence for a possible monastery. There are possible Anglo-Saxon sites south and west of Bringhurst and also to the north-east.

Medieval

The historic core of the villages of Great Easton has been identified as medieval. Medieval pottery and remains have been found within the village and in the vicinity. There is evidence for medieval cultivation to the west of the village. Number 13 Barnsdale has the remains of a medieval cruck frame within its walls and Cross Bank is thought to have been the location of the old market.

Post-medieval – modern

The first (1886) and second (1900) edition Ordnance Survey maps show a structure in the south-east corner of the Site, along with trees further back. The building no longer appears in later map editions (1960 onwards). LIDAR shows furrows in the adjacent field to the north, positioned in a NE-SW direction.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the evaluation have been defined as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- 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.

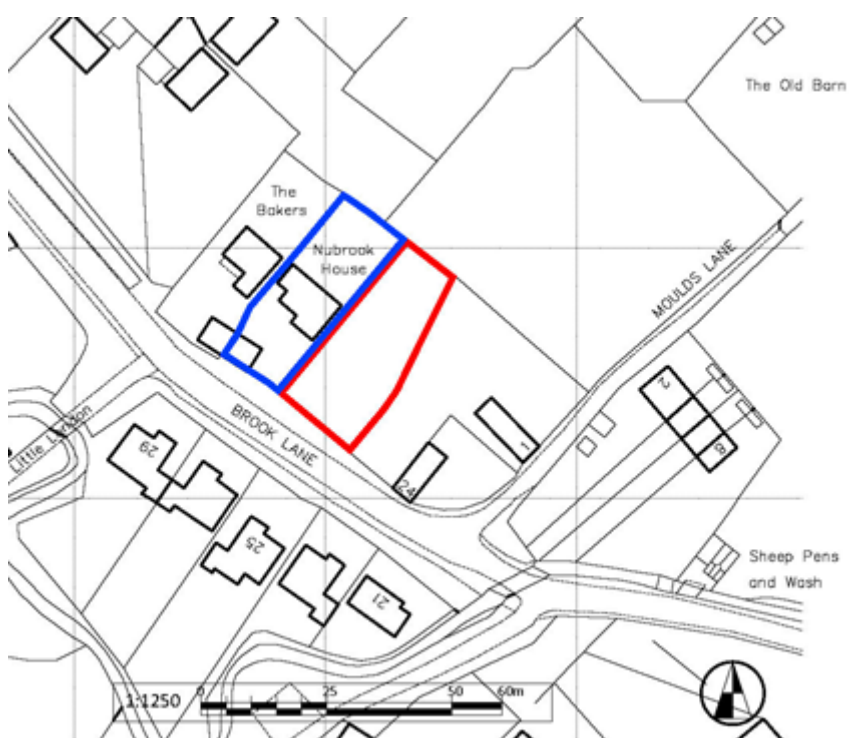


Figure 2: Site location (provided by developer)

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the recording is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context.

The site has the potential to add to research objectives on the Iron Age, Roman, and notably the medieval periods, 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).

Early Medieval

- 6.4 Rural settlement patterns
- 6.7 the agricultural economy and rural landscape

High Medieval

- 7.2 Rural settlement
- 7.7 the agrarian landscape & food producing economy

Methodology

The work followed the methodological statement set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the project (Speed 2020).

All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (2020) and adheres to their Code of Conduct (2019). The Site Accession Number (X.A94.2020) was used to identify all records and artefacts.

The original plan was for the excavation of two trenches measuring 10m and 8m. These had to be shortened or moved due to site constraints of many extant trees.

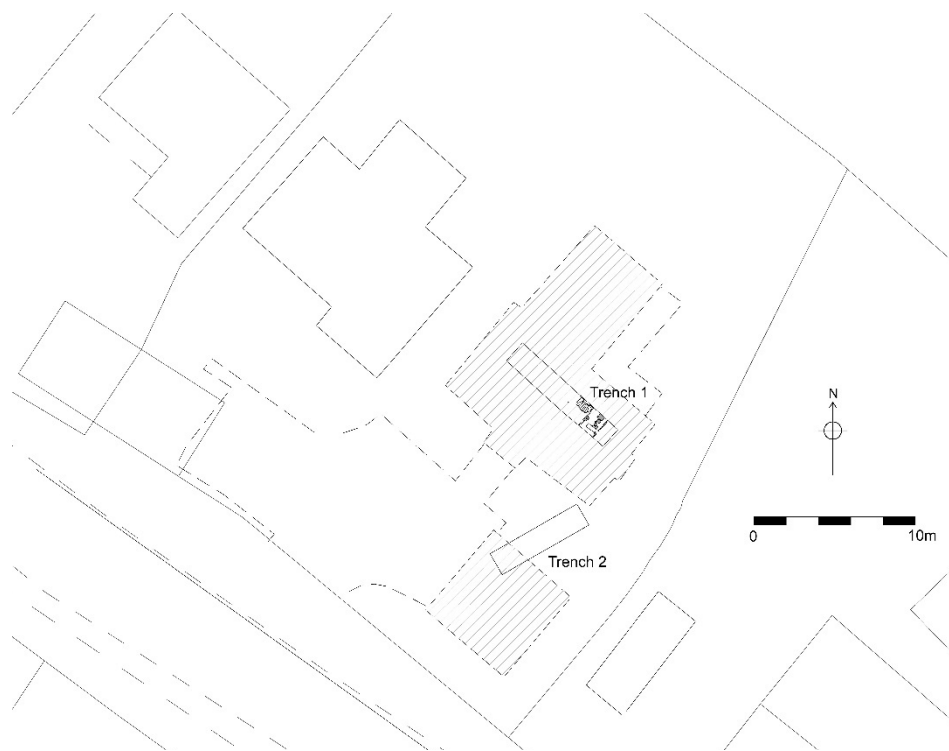


Figure 3: Trench location plan (shaded area denotes area of proposed development)

Results

Trench 1

The excavated trench was aligned north-west – south-east, measuring 8m x 1.5m (Figure 4). The natural substratum, a mixed orange-yellow clay with crushed ironstone fragments was identified at a depth of between 0.48-0.58m deep. Cut into this was a pit or terminus of a ditch [3] (Figure 6). It had a steep profile, 1.1m wide, 0.46m deep. The primary silting/erosion fill, (2) was a mixed orange-brown clay with some largish pebbles and stone fragments at the base, 0.1m thick. This was overlain by (1), mixed green-grey silty clay with semi frequent small pebbles and occasional small charcoal flecks, 0.36m thick. A tertiary flint flake was recovered from the fill.

It was overlain by orange-brown silty clay subsoil with chalk inclusions, 0.14-0.24m thick. Within this were what appeared to be a north-east – south-west linear aligned set of stones (4). These were made of mostly large pebbles or limestone fragments, and one squared off fragment of red ironstone (Figure 6). It is uncertain where these represent, they could perhaps be the remnants of the very bottom of a wall foundation, land drain, or demolition material.

This was overlain by topsoil, brown-grey sandy clay loam with charcoal inclusions, 0.08-0.15m thick. Recovered from this layer were sherds of different types of earthenware pottery dating from the 18-19th centuries, and a clay pipe bowl from the later 18th century. There was also a single fragment of Roman flue tile. This was covered by modern turf, 0.2-0.22m thick.

Table 1: Trench 1 measurements

OD Height: 59m	(NW) 0m	4m	8m (SE)
Turf depth	0.22	0.2	0.2
Topsoil depth	0.08	0.14	0.15
Subsoil depth	0.18	0.24	0.14
Depth of natural	0.48	0.58	0.49
Base of trench	0.54	0.65	0.49

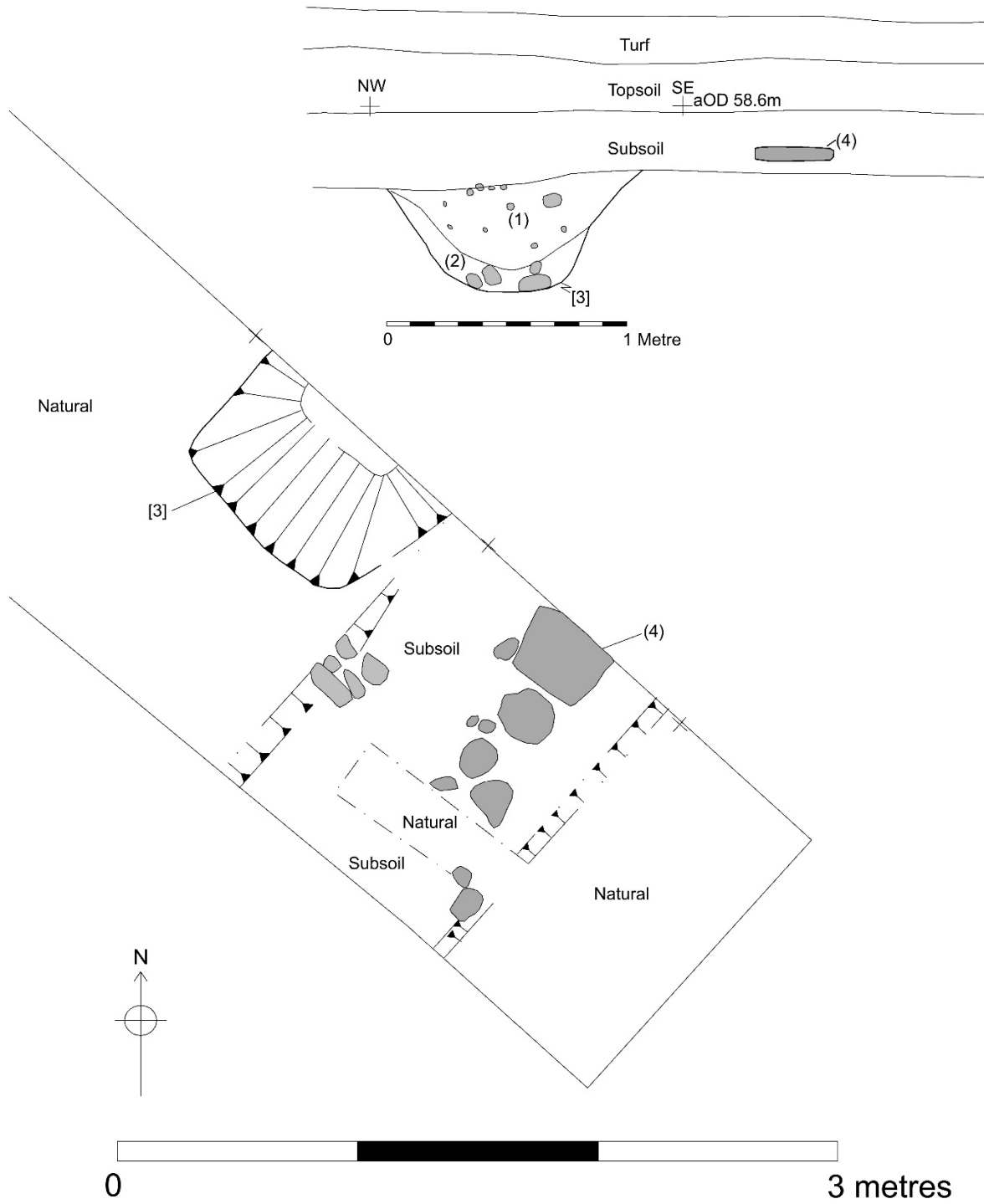


Figure 4: Plan and section of archaeological features in Trench 1



Figure 5: Trench 1 looking north-west



Figure 6: Views of possible wall (4), and pit [3]

Trench 2

The excavated trench was aligned north-east – south-west, measuring 6.2m x 1.5m (Figure 7). The natural substratum was the same as in Trench 1 at a depth of between 0.57-0.71m deep. It was overlain by subsoil, 0.04-0.08m thick. Cut into this was a recent small circular pit (visible at far end – right of trench, see Figure 7), 0.3m diameter. It was filled by topsoil, included in the fill were early 20th Century bottle fragments and pottery. Topsoil was between 0.25-0.33m thick. More earthenware fragments from the 18-19th centuries were recovered from the topsoil, as well as fragments of Staffordshire slipware from the late 17-18th centuries. It was overlain by an overburden soil of a mix of topsoil and natural clay, 0.21-0.24m thick at the southwestern end of the trench as part of modern landscaping. Modern turf covered this 0.16-0.23m thick.

Table 2: Trench 2 measurements

OD Height: 59m	(SW) 0m	3m	6m (NE)
Turf depth	0.23	0.21	0.16
Overburden depth	>0.24	0.21	-
Topsoil depth	-	0.25	0.33
Subsoil depth	-	0.04	0.08
Depth of natural	-	0.71	0.57
Base of trench	0.47	0.71	0.57



Figure 7: Trench 2 looking south-west

The Finds

The flint – *Wayne Jarvis*

A single flake weighing 1g was recovered from fill (1) of ditch/pit [3] in trench 1. It is most like a tertiary flake (bladelet). In form it is a blade - which isn't a common natural occurrence at all. Bladelet technology is most likely Mesolithic or perhaps Neolithic in date. It's not a tool, and may well be residual in a later feature as flint is very long-lived, perhaps indicated by the small chips off it.

Pottery and Tile - *Nicholas J. Cooper*

Introduction

A small group of modern pottery comprising at least ten different vessels was recovered from a buried topsoil across Trenches 1 and 2.

Methodology

The pottery was analysed by form and fabric in accordance with national guidelines (Barclay *et al.* 2016), using the Leicestershire County Museums pottery fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999) and quantified by sherd count and weight (g).

Analysis

The group from Trench 1 comprises, two sherds (107g) of black glazed earthenware, two sherds (11g) of white, clear glazed earthenware (EA8), one the rim of a plate, the other the base of a jug, dating to the 18th or 19th century, and the handle (8g) of a brown glazed jug (EA4?). Additionally, there is an abraded fragment of ceramic building material (201g) in a sandy oxidised fabric and with an angle edge. The faint combed pattern on the external surface would suggest it is from a Roman *imbrex* box flue tile, and is therefore residual in this group.

The group from Trench 2 comprises the base (271g) of an internally glazed earthenware bowl or pancheon (EA 1), four sherds (102g) of black glazed earthenware (Fabric EA1/6), and two sherds (9g) from a press-moulded, Staffordshire slipware plate (EA7), suggesting a later 17th or 18th century date. All pottery has been retained in the finds archive.

Discussion and Conclusion

The evaluation at Nubrook House had the potential for archaeological remains of the medieval and post-medieval periods. The site lies within the historic medieval and post-medieval core of the village, with known archaeological remains in the area. Looking at the cartographic evidence, the site appears to have been in a probable Saxon parcel of land, Brook Lane being the western edge of the village leading to open field systems, bounded by the brook. However, the evaluation trenches did not reveal any definitive Saxon or medieval features. Ditch or pit [3] lay beneath the subsoil, and could be of medieval or earlier date. It contained a single worked lithic (of Mesolithic or Neolithic date), this may have been residual, and not dating the feature. Further excavation would be needed to clarify its date, and the interpretation of the feature.

The rough linear alignment of stones (4) could perhaps be the remnants of a wall foundation, land drain, or demolition material, found within the subsoil. They may relate to a structure shown on the first edition OS map (which shows a structure in the south-east corner of the

Site), or else earlier activity on the Site. A small amount of 17th to 19th century pottery sherds recovered may relate to this potential structure.

The single fragment of Roman flue tile in the topsoil may relate to a suspected Roman settlement in the north-eastern part of the village (Cooper and Score 2006). This has been retained in the finds archive.

Archive and Publication

The archive for the project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums. An accession number (X.A94.2020) has been requested and will be used to identify the records. The archive consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (2020-157)
- 2 trial trench recording sheets
- 1 context index
- 3 context sheets
- 1 drawing index
- 1 drawing record sheet
- 1 A3 permatrace sheet
- 1 Photographic record sheet
- 1 colour photo contact sheet
- 1 CD containing this report and the digital photographs
- 1 finds checklist (stored with appropriate finds: pottery, tile, clay pipe, flint)

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.

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UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
UK

t: +44 (0)116 252 2848

f: +44 (0)116 252 2614

e: ulas@le.ac.uk

