



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**

## Archaeological Services

An Archaeological investigation on land near 'High Winds', Lower Moor Road, Coleorton,  
Leicestershire, LE67 8FL

NGR: SK 40199 17499

Claire Brown



ULAS Report No. 2018-206

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**An Archaeological Investigation on land next to 'High Winds' off  
Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire, LE678FL**

**NGR: SK 40199 17499**

**Claire Brown**

**For: Harrington Building and Construction Limited**

**Planning Authority: North West Leicestershire District Council**

**Planning Ref: 16/00352/FUL**

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

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## **An Archaeological Investigation into land next to 'High Winds' Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire, LE67 8FL**

**Claire Brown**

### **Summary**

*University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation for land next to 'High Winds', Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire, LE67 8FL (SK 40199 17499). This was commissioned by Harrington Building and Construction Limited.*

*The archaeological work was carried out from the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the historic Environment. Six 20m trenches were excavated to evaluate the land as a condition of the planning permission for future residential development on the site (16/00352/FUL).*

*Evidence for pre-19<sup>th</sup> century mining activity, including possible bell pits, and surface extraction pits were found in all of the trenches. Given the uneven earthworks across the rest of the field, these were probably widespread across the site. This is consistent with the Historic Environment Record data suggesting good potential for archaeological deposits relating to medieval and post-medieval mining activity in the area.*

*The only dating evidence came from two sherds of Cistercian ware (dating to 1450-1650) from the upper part of one of the surface extraction pits.*

*The archive and report will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums under accession number X.A129.2018.*

### **Introduction**

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for the archaeological field evaluation on land next to 'High winds', Lower Moor road, Coleorton, Leicestershire, LE67 8FL (Figs 1 and 2). This work was commissioned by Harrington Building and Construction Limited and was undertaken as a condition of planning permission for the construction of three dwellings on the site (Planning Ref: 16/00352/FUL). This was an initial phase of work intended to identify the character and extent of any heritage assets in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains could be assessed by the Planning Authority and a mitigation strategy developed.

This report presents the results of the programme of archaeological trial trenching, which took place in December 2018. It followed a strategy for the work devised by ULAS, which was set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for land next to 'High Winds', Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire (ULAS 2018).

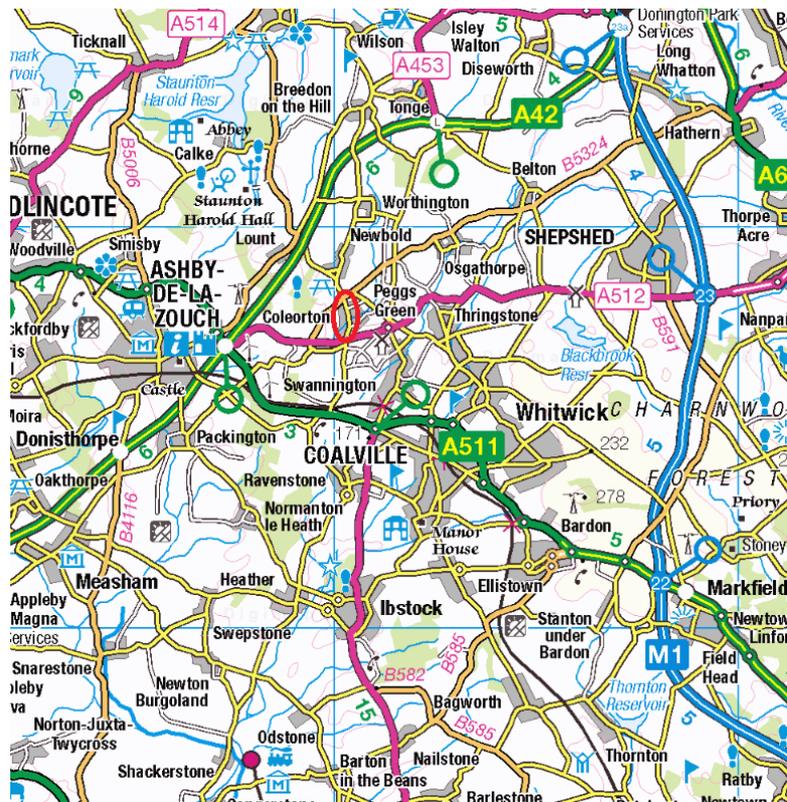


Figure 1: Site location (shown in red). Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 2: Location of site and proposed development plan (provided by client).

### ***Historical and Archaeological Background***

The site lies to the north of the medieval and post-medieval historic settlement of Coleorton (HER ref.: **MLE10367**). The Designated Grade II\* Registered Gardens of Coleorton Hall (DLE693, MLE4506), lie just to the south. The gardens were developed in the early 19th century by Sir George Beaumont. There is evidence for coal mining in the area including a Scheduled Monument to the west of coal mining remains at The Conery, 500m south of Coleorton Hall (1018462). The site lies within an area identified on the HER as a possible area of medieval coal and iron ore mining (MLE4931). Around 1300 Isabella de Hastings was responsible for working coal and iron ore at three places, including Gelsmoor just north of Coleorton. The mining earthworks were surveyed in 1992.

A local historian with a special interest in the history of mining in and around the village of Coleorton recounts the main 16<sup>th</sup> century property owners, the Sheldon family's mining business in the area and describes the Bell or Beehive pits as having a shaft sunk to the depth at which the coal was found and the miners excavated outwards (Stewart 2013 and 2014).

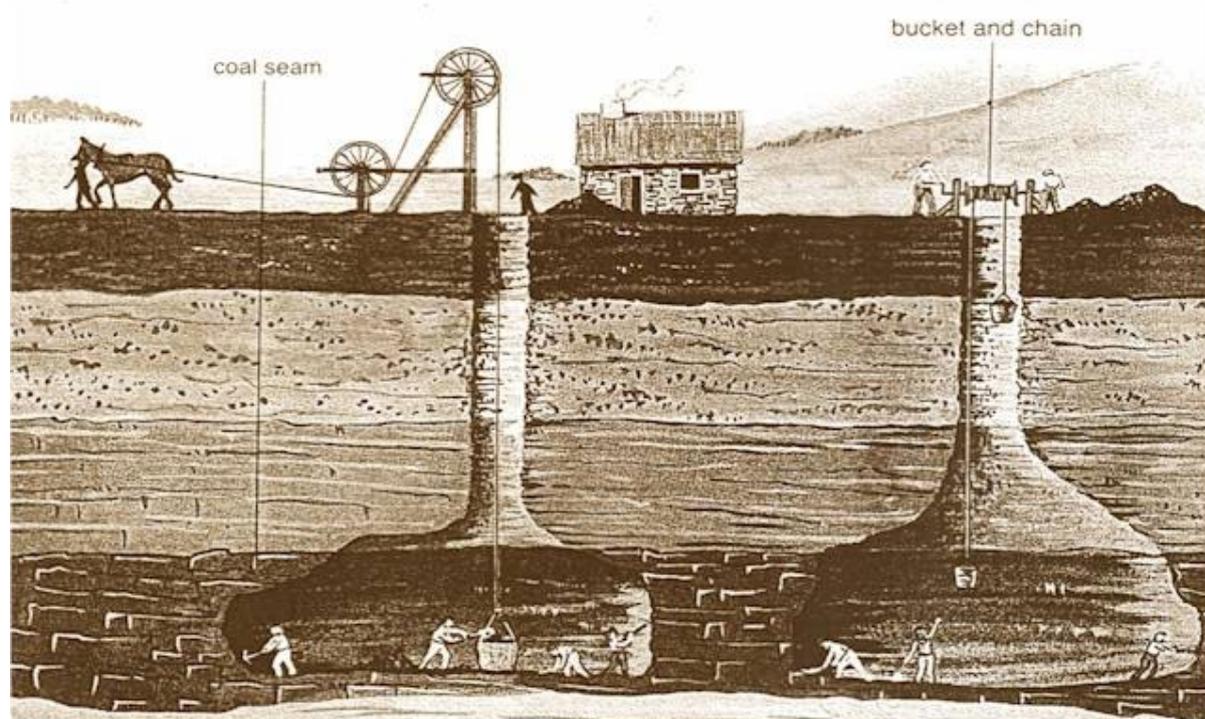


Figure 3: Example of Bell mines (from Stewart 2013).

The Planning Archaeologist therefore identified the development site as having good potential for the presence of below ground deposits, particularly relating to medieval and post-medieval mining activity, which could be affected by the current proposals. The Planning Archaeologist therefore recommended an archaeological evaluation as an initial stage comprising trial trenching followed by excavation of any archaeological deposits, the results of which would be used to create a mitigation strategy.

## *Archaeological Objectives*

The main objectives of the archaeological work were:

- 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.

The results of the evaluation would then 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 an area of investigation necessarily remain unknown until archaeological work is undertaken, some initial objectives were derived from the *East Midlands Heritage* research agenda (Knight *et al.* 2012). The HER suggests that there was potential for archaeological deposits from the late medieval and post-medieval periods. The evaluation therefore had the potential to contribute to the following research aims.

### *Medieval*

- 6.6.5. How may we enhance our understanding of the lead industry, the extraction and smelting of iron ore and the environmental impact of these activities?
- 7.6.2 By what means were the extractive mineral industries controlled or organised by royal, monastic or lay lords?
- 7.6.3 Can we identify, investigate and date sites associated with the region's key extractive industries (especially iron, coal, lead and alabaster), the production and distribution of cloth and leather-work, and freshwater or marine fishing?

## *Methodology*

All work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (ULAS 2018) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct (2014a) and adhered to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2014b). An accession number/site code was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts.

Prior to any machining general photographs of the site areas were taken. The programme of work consisted of the excavation of six trenches measuring 20m x 1.6m which were distributed as close to the footprint of the buildings as possible (Fig. 4). Trench 4 was moved several

metres further south than the proposed Trench location because of the proximity of the overhead power cables running across the site.

Excavation was carried out with a machine appropriate for the work (JCB 3CX ECO) fitted with 1.6m flat-bladed ditching bucket) to expose the underlying strata. Topsoil and overburden were removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

In Trench 3 where a possible bell pit had been identified, excavations were taken down in 0.5 metre spits and recorded at each level. A section was excavated by machine through a bell pit down to 2.5m, at which point the decision was taken to record and backfill the pit immediately for health and safety reasons.

The ULAS recording manual was used as a guide for all recording. Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. At least one longitudinal face of each trench was recorded. Trench locations were recorded by an appropriate method and then tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The trenches were backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation.

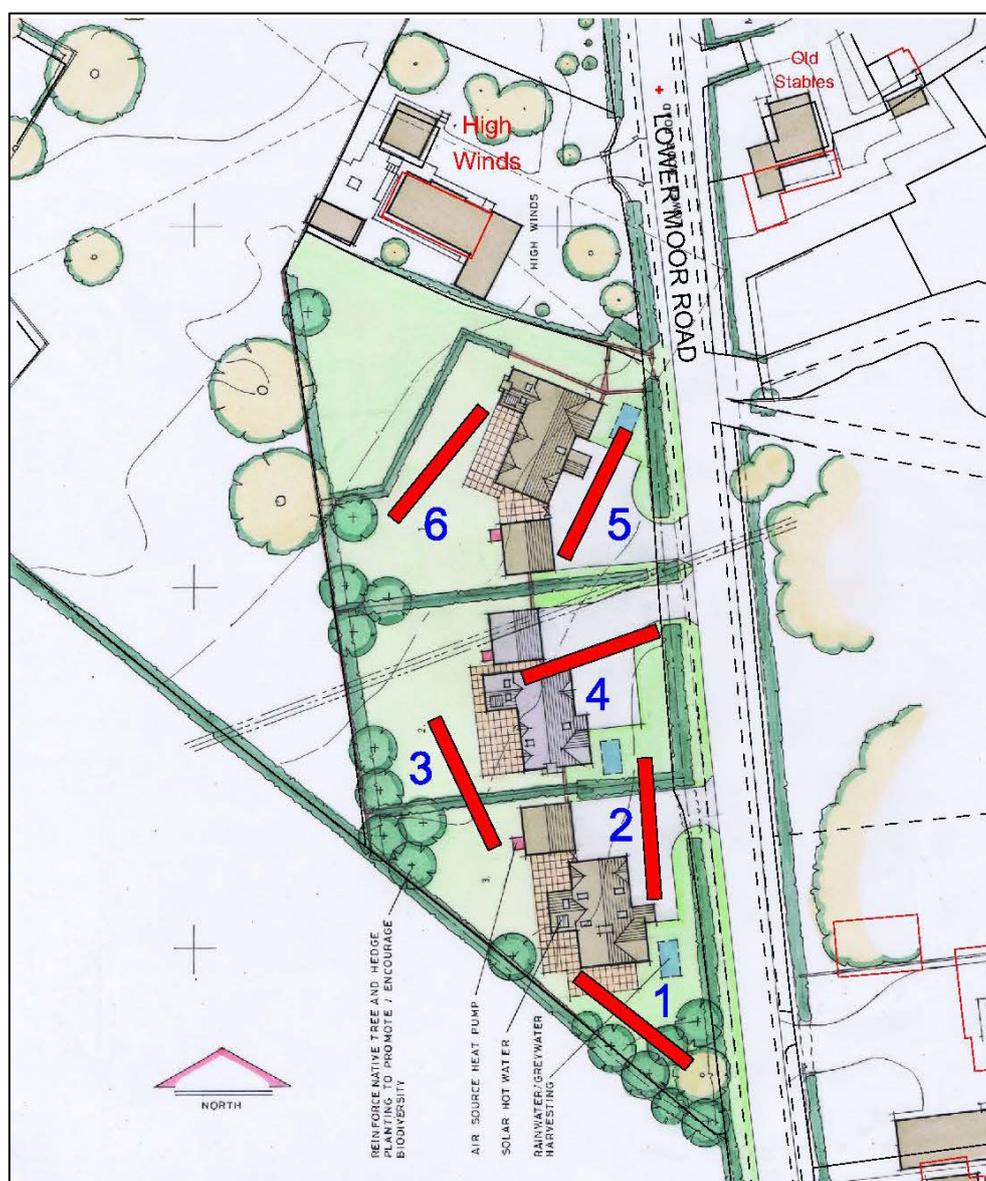


Figure 4: Trench Plan

## Results

A total of six trenches were excavated between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018. These trenches measured approximately 20m x 1.6m, and were located close to the footprint of the buildings as agreed with the client and the planning archaeologist.

The weather was variable but, with the exception of the last half of the third day conditions for excavation were good. Prior to the start of the evaluation the trenches were set out using a tape measure to roughly locate the planned position of the trenches.

The topsoil was consistent across the site and comprised a dark brown silt which contained <10 % coal fragments, degraded ironstone, small pieces of limestone. The subsoil was very variable in depth and consistency and was made up of seams of coal residue, silt, degraded ironstone and limestone, and occasional blue-grey clay. The course components were coal, ironstone and small sandstone and limestone pieces. The natural substratum was pale yellow clay.

Table 1: Trench results

Trench No.	Orientation	Min. Depth	Max. Depth	Length of Trench	Width of Trench	Comments
1	N-S	0.5m	1.35m	20.00m	1.60m	Evidence of mining activity: Two possible bell pits
2	NE-SW	0.5m	1.10.m	20.00m	1.60m	Evidence of mining activity. A gully and terminus [4]
3	NE-SW	0.60m	0.74m	20.00m	1.60m	Evidence of mining activity and a possible bell pit.
4	NW-SE	0.54m	0.80m	20.00m	1.60m	Evidence of mining activity. A 16 <sup>th</sup> century extraction pit [1]
5	NE-SW	0.55m	0.80	20.00m	1.60m	Evidence of mining activity, a probable extraction pit [6] and a 19 <sup>th</sup> century cess pit overflow
6	NE-SW	0.52	0.80	20.00	1.60	Evidence of mining activity – two bell pits

### *Trench 1*

Trench 1 was the southernmost trench on the proposed development site and orientated roughly north-south (Fig. 3). There was one clear, subcircular area of coal residue at the south end which may have been the top of a bell pit (Figs 5-6), two subcircular probable extraction pits and two areas where the coal seam was close to the surface. The area of coal was machine excavated in two places to check it was a natural feature (Fig. 7)



Figure 5: Trench 1 looking north-east with a possible bell pit in the foreground, at the southern end of the trench.



Figure 6: Probable bell pit in Trench 1



Figure 7: Machined trench section in Trench 1 showing natural coal seam.

### *Trench 2*

Trench 2 ran approximately north to south along the eastern edge of the site (Fig. 4). This trench revealed a seam of superficial natural coal at the southern end of the trench and the depth of the natural substratum, established by a sondage, was 1.10m deep with 0.35m of coal rich subsoil/made ground left at the base of the rest of the trench (Fig. 8). There was a semi-circular area of grey clay over 3m in diameter at the southern end of the trench perhaps representing surface mining activity (Fig. 8, foreground). Ten meters from the southern end of the trench was a gully terminus [4], 0.3m deep and 0.8m wide with a single mid grey-brown silty clay fill with lots of small coal fragments (Fig. 9). There were no dateable finds from this feature.



Figure 8: Trench 2 looking north (north arrow misaligned to the north west). Area of possible surface mining visible under the ranging poles.

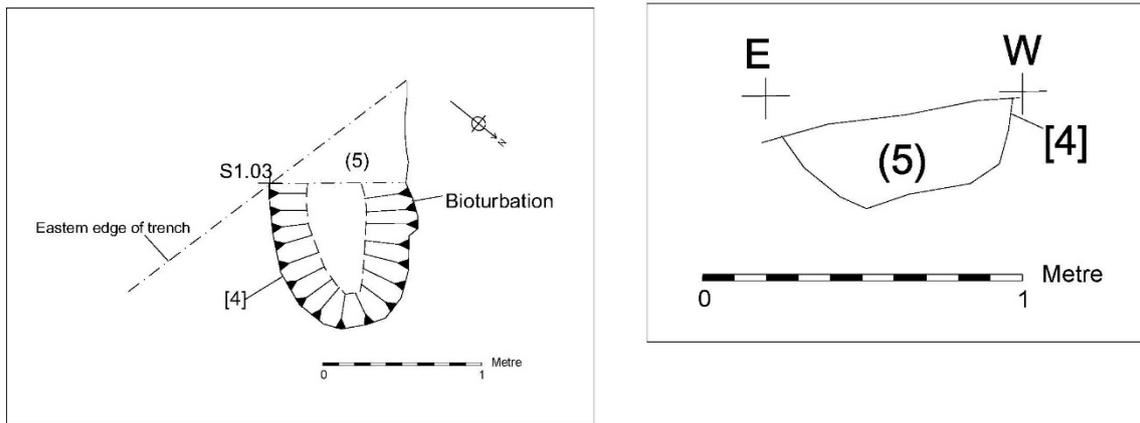


Figure 9: North-east facing section of gully terminus [4] in Trench 2.

### *Trench 3*

This trench ran north-east to south-west in the southern half of the site, and contained two possible bell pits (Figs 4 and 10). The first was a large irregular sub-circular feature in the south western half of the trench; the other at the north-east end, was a clearer feature. Machining of the first feature quickly identified it as an amorphous coal-filled feature with no obvious form. At 2m depth it was backfilled for health and safety reasons.



Figure 10: Trench 3 looking south-west

The second feature was machine excavated to a depth of 2.5m in stages, and the circular shaft outline was clear throughout (Figs 11-14). Excavation was halted at 2.5m for health and safety reasons. The shafts are known to have a depth of more than 20 metres before extending outwards to work the coal seam (Stewart 2013). There were no dateable finds produced from this feature.

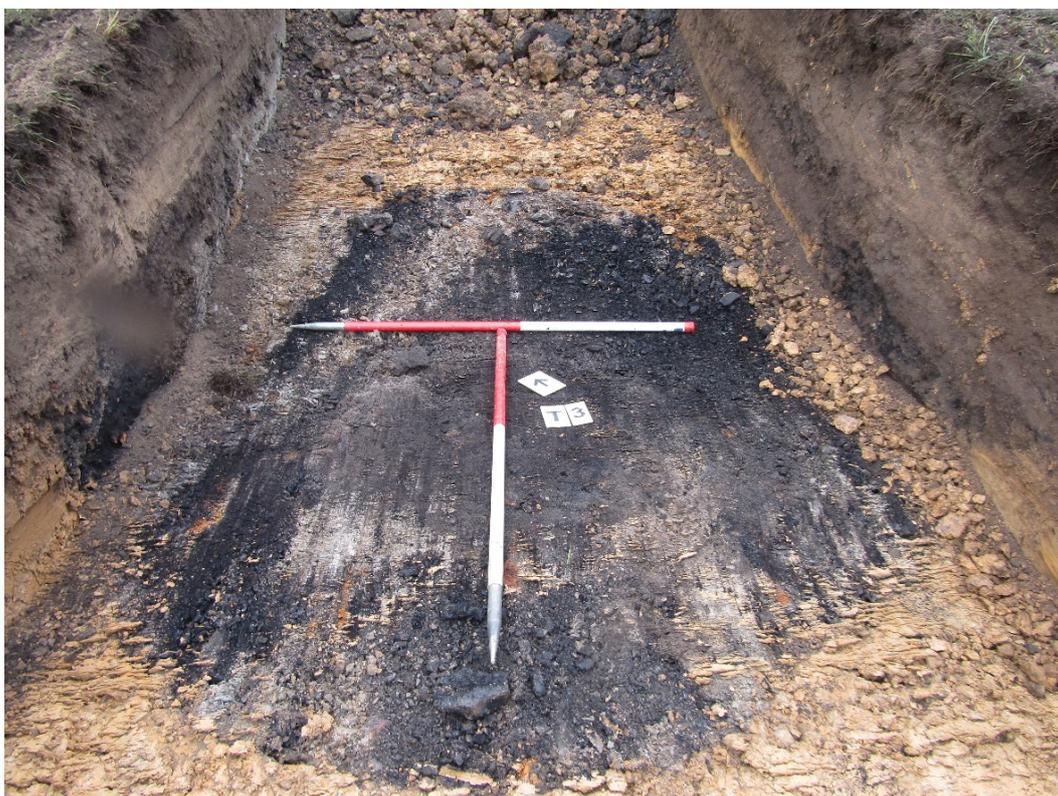


Figure 11: Bell pit feature in the north-east end of Trench 3



Figure 12: the bell pit in Trench 3 at 1.75m depth



Figure 13: the bell pit in Trench 3 at 2m depth with pit shaft clearly visible



Figure 14: The bell pit in Trench 3 at 2.5m depth

### *Trench 4*

This trench ran contained an area of exposed coal seam in the north east end (Figs 15 and 16) and a sub-circular feature 4m from the south-west end of the trench. This feature [1] was half sectioned and revealed itself to be a pit, possibly for surface coal extraction or associated with mine working.

The feature was 2.30m in diameter and 0.70m at its deepest point and on its south-east edge had an area of either redeposited natural, bioturbation or possibly a later unfinished recut. The lowest fill (2) was silty clay, mid grey in colour with frequent coal and ironstone fragment inclusions. The upper fill (3) was mid brown silty sandy clay with occasional coal inclusions (Figs 17-18). The only finds were two joining fragments of either Cistercian or Midland Black ware of a date range 1450-1650, probably produced at Ticknell in Derbyshire. The fragments were from a hollow ware vessel with a flared rim and a rim diameter of *c.* 100mm (Sawday, pers. comm. 2018).



Figure 15: Trench 4 looking south-east, with coal seam and possible coal extraction feature under ranging poles, and pit feature [1] at the south-east end of the trench



Figure 16: Trench 4 looking north-west showing pit feature [1]

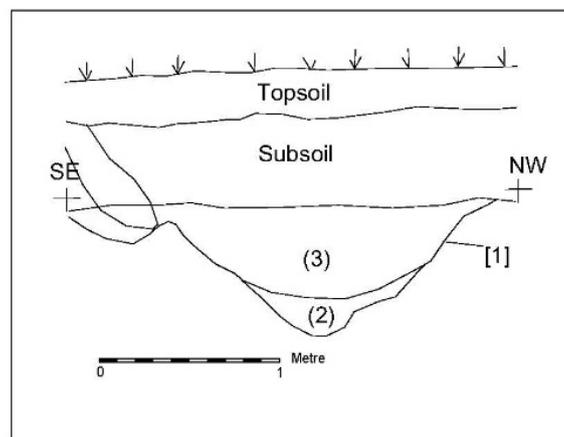
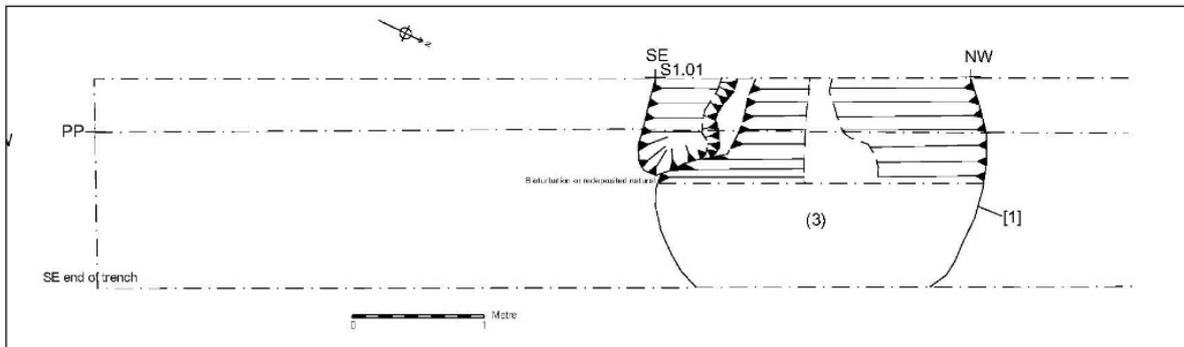


Figure 17: Trench 4: Plan of pit [1] and North-east facing section



Figure 18: Half-sectioned pit [1] in Trench 4

### *Trench 5*

This trench was orientated roughly north-east to south-west and the natural substrata was reached between 0.50m and 0.80m (Fig. 19). The trench contained two features, a semi-circular pit [6], at the south-west end of the trench (Figs 20 -21) and a probable 19<sup>th</sup> century cess pit overflow with runoff pipe at the north-east (Fig. 22). The cess overflow pit contained a significant quantity of 19<sup>th</sup> century brick and was part of the sewage treatment system belonging to the nearby 'High Winds' house to the north.

Pit [6] was 2.10m in diameter and 0.50m deep at its deepest point (Fig. 21). There was a single mid grey-brown coal rich fill with an area of pure coal near the base. There were no dateable finds recovered from this feature. There is a coal seam that runs along the trench edge at this point which is absent for much of the pit's diameter, suggesting that the pit was a surface extraction pit mining the coal in this seam.



Figure 19: Trench 5 looking north-east



Figure 20: South-east facing quarter section of pit [6]

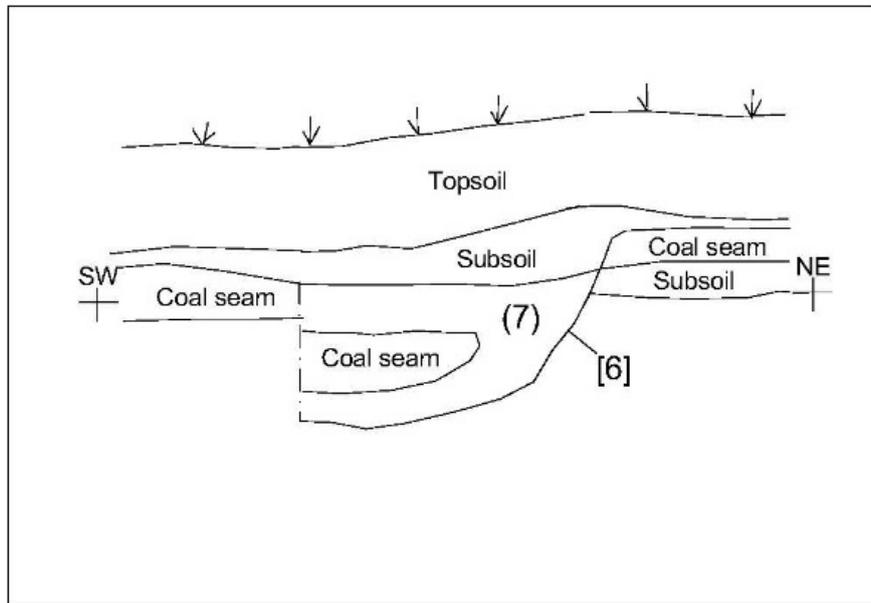
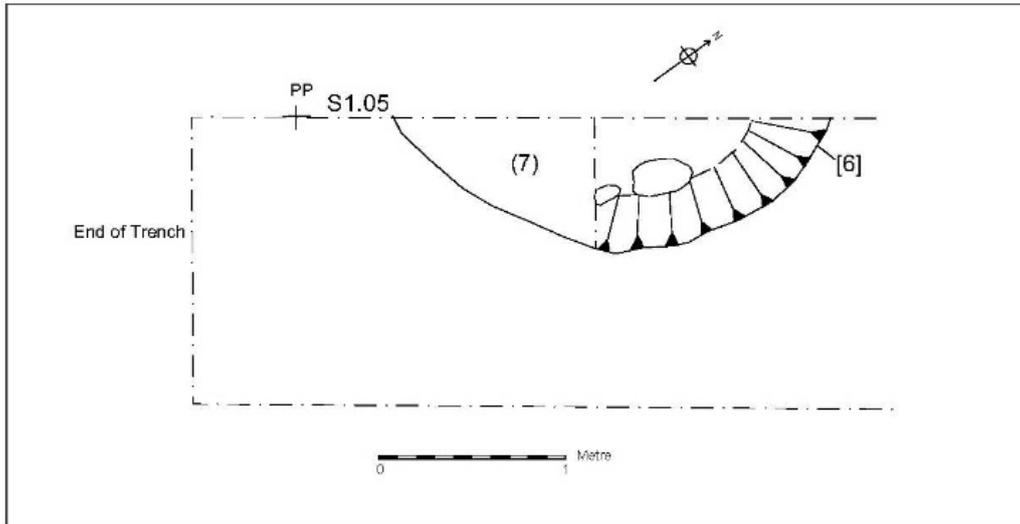


Figure 21: South-east facing section and plan of pit [6].



Figure 22: 19<sup>th</sup> century overflow cess pit with runoff pipe. Looking north-east.

### *Trench 6*

Trench 6 was located roughly parallel with Trench 5 but c. 30m west, also running north-east/south-west, and was excavated down to the natural substratum (Fig. 23). There were two features revealed in the trench; one a probable bell pit approximately 1.10m in diameter (Fig. 24) and a hemispherical large area of grey clay interspersed with spreads of coal dust/fragments, more than 3m in diameter which represents a possible surface extraction pit (Fig. 25). Neither feature was excavated.



Figure 23: Trench 6. Looking north-east.



Figure 24: Probable bell pit in Trench 6. Looking north-east



Figure 25: Possible clay extraction pit in Trench 6

### ***Discussion and conclusion***

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Mr P Harrington to fulfil the Planning Conditions for a proposed residential development. Six trenches were excavated which revealed a number of features relating to mining, including bell pit shafts and surface extraction pits. Only one feature, pit [1] produced any dateable artefacts – two pottery sherds dating to 1450-1650, (late medieval early modern, identified by Deborah Sawday and not retained). Bell pits represent a method of coal extraction practiced from the medieval period to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and in this area, the Sheldon family were particularly active in developing mining in and around Coleorton in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the activity on this development site could therefore date from that period. Given the results it seems likely that there are many more shafts and other related features within the site (Fig. 25). Limited trial excavation of some of the bell pit shafts proved the deposits to be deeper than 2.5m and it seems likely that the shafts are significantly deeper (See Fig. 3).

This evaluation has helped identify, investigate and date a coal extraction site from the late medieval to early modern period (Research Objective 7.6.3). The area did not show any evidence for the existence of a lead industry or the smelting of iron ore (Research Objective 6.6.5).

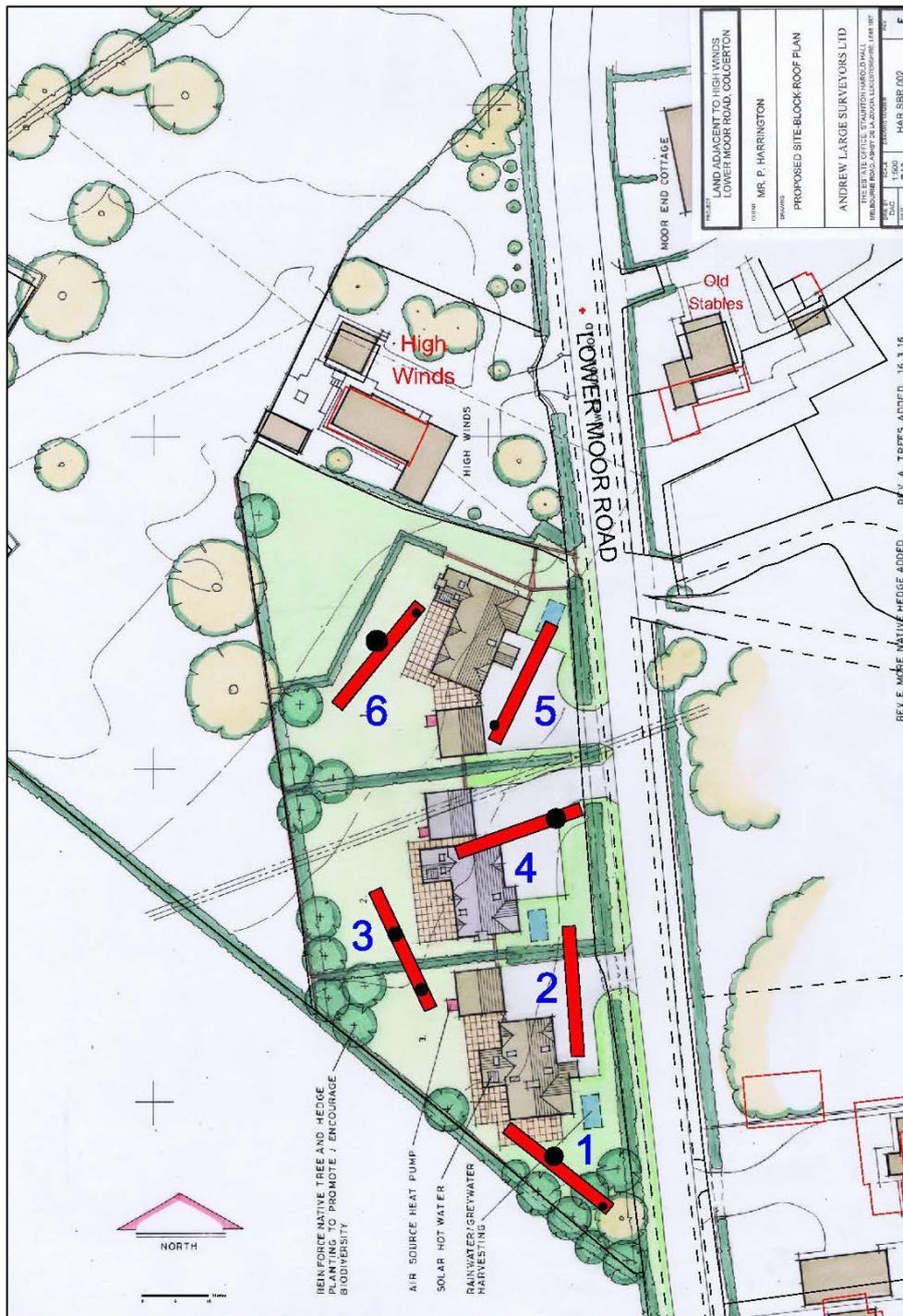


Figure 26: Trench Plan plus showing approximate location of bell pits and surface extraction pits in black.

## **Archive**

The paper archive consists of:

- 2 x A2 drawing sheet
- 4 x Trench Recording forms
- 1 x Photographic record indices
- 43 x Digital photographs
- A risk assessment form
- 6 x Context recording sheets
- 1 x Context record indices

## **Acknowledgements**

Claire Brown of ULAS undertook the trial trenching on behalf of Mr Paul Harrington, for Harrington Building and Construction Limited. The project was managed by John Thomas and Vicki Score.

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ULAS, 2018, Written Scheme of Investigation for land at Lower Moor Road, Coleorton.

**Appendix 1: OASIS data entry**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1-417502		
	<b>Project Name</b>	Land next to 'High Winds' off Lower Moor Road, Coleorton		
	<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	Start:03/12/2018, End 05/12/2018		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	No		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Evaluation		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Pasture/waste land		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> century Post medieval pottery		
	<b>Development Type</b>	Residential		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Planning condition		
	<b>Planning Ref.</b>	16/00352/FUL		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Land next to 'High Winds' off Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire, LE67 8FL		
	<b>Study Area</b>	0.37 Hectares		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK 40199 17499		
	<b>Depth</b>	116m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Local Planning Authority (North-West Leicestershire District Council)		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	V. Score and J. Thomas		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Claire Brown		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Mr P Harrington, Harrington Building and Construction Limited		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	None	Leicestershire Museums Service	Leicestershire Museums Service
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>	None	X.A129.2018	X.A129.2018
	<b>Contents</b>	None (2x pottery sherds not retained)	Report Photographs	Trench recording sheets, photo record sheets, general notes, unpublished report
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	<b>Title</b>	An Archaeological Evaluation on land off Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire LE67 8FL		
	<b>Author</b>	C. Brown		
	<b>Other bibliographic details</b>	ULAS Report no: 2018-206		
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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](mailto:rjb16@le.ac.uk)

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

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

**e:** [ulas@le.ac.uk](mailto:ulas@le.ac.uk)



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