

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
on Land at Newbold, Owston
and Newbold, Leicestershire
(SK 765 090)**

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1. Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out within the area of the deserted medieval village of Newbold, Owston, Leicestershire, (SK 765 090). This work was undertaken during the ground works for the laying of a new underground cable on behalf of Central Networks PLC by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS).

The watching brief uncovered the stone wall footing remains of a probable medieval building and boundary ditch.

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services Section, under the Accession Number: [X.A201.2007].

2. Introduction

2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) during the excavation of trenches for a new underground electricity cable.

2.2 In accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG 16, Archaeology and Planning, paragraph 30), this document presents the results of an archaeological watching brief required by Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team, in their capacity as archaeological adviser to the planning authority. It was requested that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during ground-works to observe and record any remains of archaeological/historical interest associated with the excavation of trenches for the laying of the new underground electricity cable.

2.3 The University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was then commissioned to carry out the watching brief on behalf of the clients, Central Networks PLC. The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by ULAS on the 3rd, 12th and 14th of March 2007.

3. Site Location

3.1 The route of the underground cable is located on land within the small village of Newbold, near Owston, Leicestershire (SK 765 090). It consists of an area *c.*6.5 ha.

4. Geology and Topography

4.1 The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology of the site is likely to consist of Upper Lias boulder clays. The site lies at a height of *c.* 140m O.D. The land slopes slightly from the north-east towards the south-west.

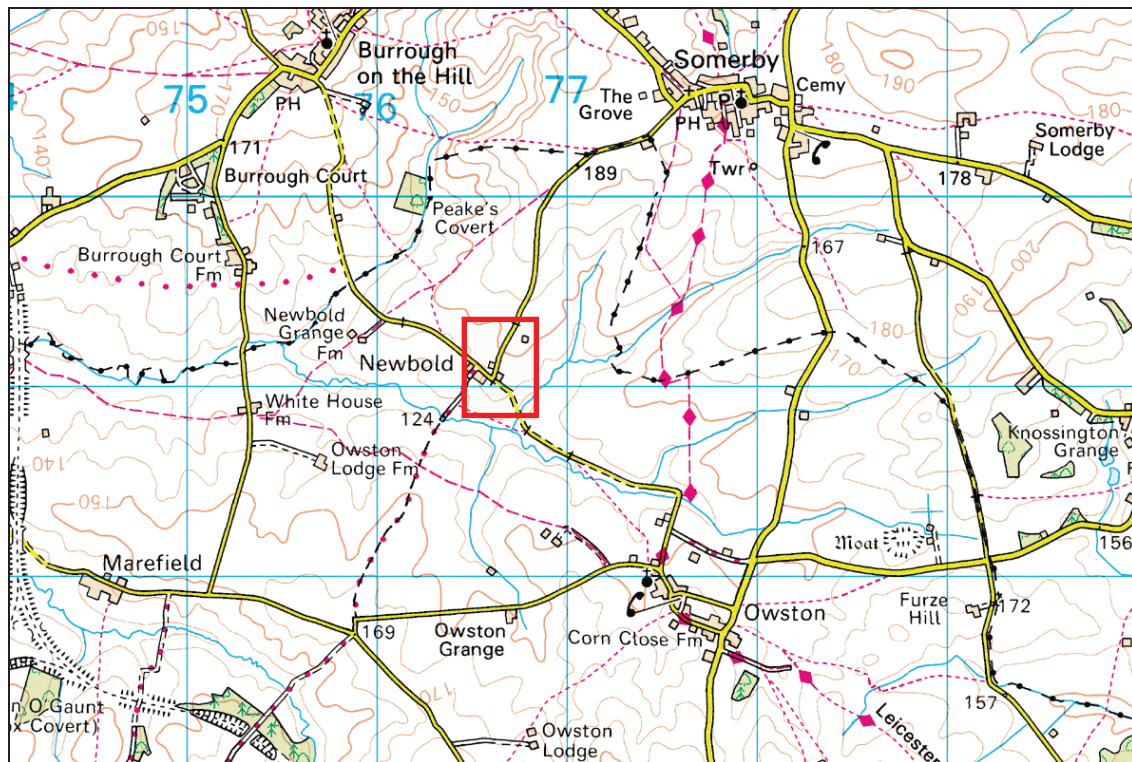


Figure 1: Location Plan

Reproduced from Landranger 1:50 000 scale by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

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5. Archaeological Background

5.1 The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the route of the underground cable lies within the deserted medieval village (DMV) of Newbold Saucy (Fig. 3; HER Ref. No. MLE2226). The village remains consist of various earthworks including a hollow way aligned north to south, with, on either side, croft boundaries and house platforms. To the east of the ford across the stream at the southern extent of the DMV (SP 763 088) are earthworks/ditches of dams and leats probably associated with a watermill (MLE 2228). There was a recorded population of 22 in Owston and Newbold in 1086 (Lee and McKinlay 1964, 270-275).

5.2 A chapel is known to have stood somewhere within the village, permission having been granted for its foundation in the 12th century. A chapel at Owston is mentioned in 1220 although whether it refers to the one at Newbold Saucy is unclear and in 1361 permission was given for mass to be celebrated there four times a week. The former chapelry of Newbold was apparently at one time a substantial hamlet: in 1334 it was assessed at 19s. 6d. compared with £1 13s. 6d. for Owston itself. Twenty-nine individuals are recorded as paying the poll tax in 1377. Separate figures for Newbold are rarely given, but nine households were assessed for the hearth tax in 1670 compared with 38 in Owston suggesting de-population between the late 14th and 17th centuries (Lee and McKinlay 1964, 270-275). Three houses are recorded in Nichols (1815) and 24 individuals in the census of 1841 (Hoskins 1944-5; 1950; DMVRG 1963-4).

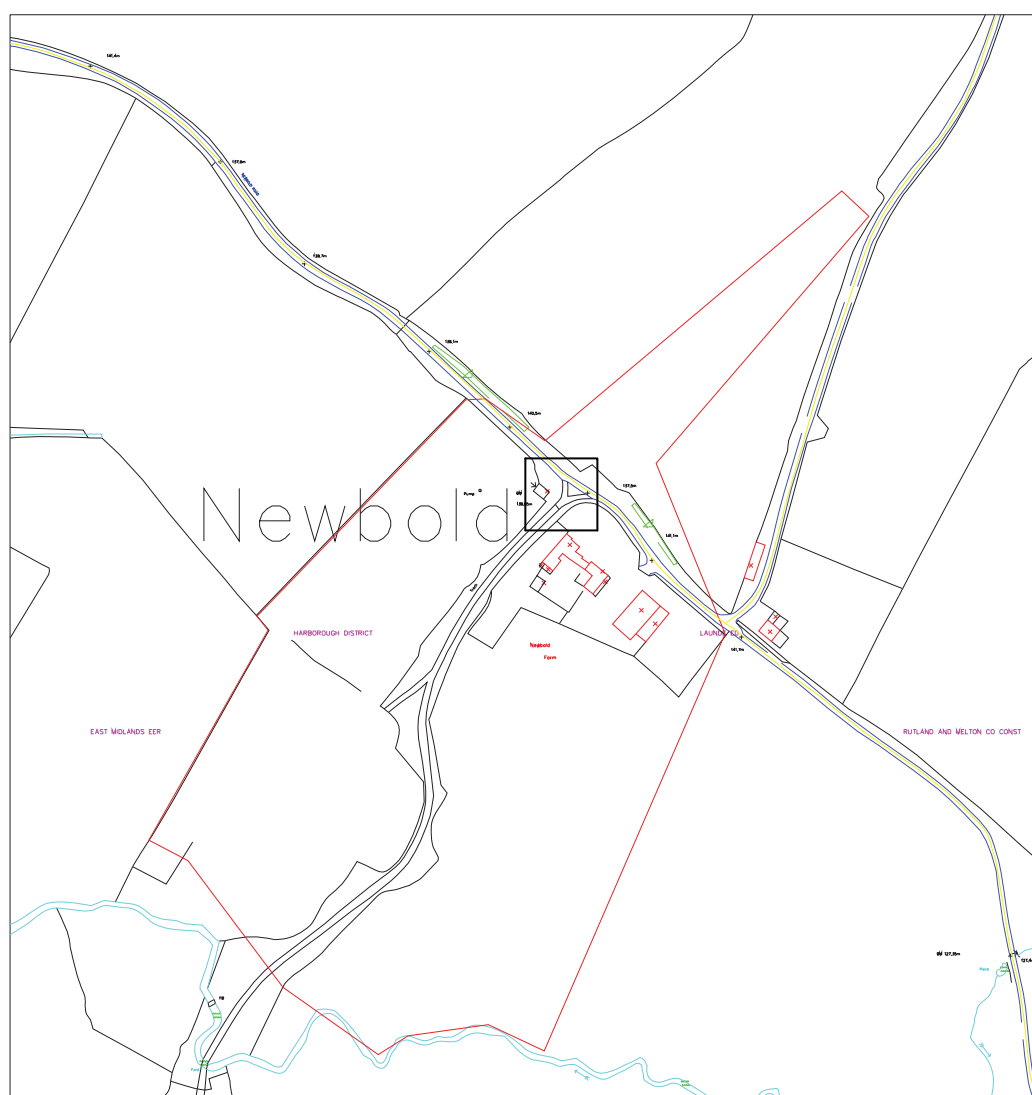


Fig.2 Location of Newbold Saucy DMV marked in red with area of excavation (Fig 4) outlined.

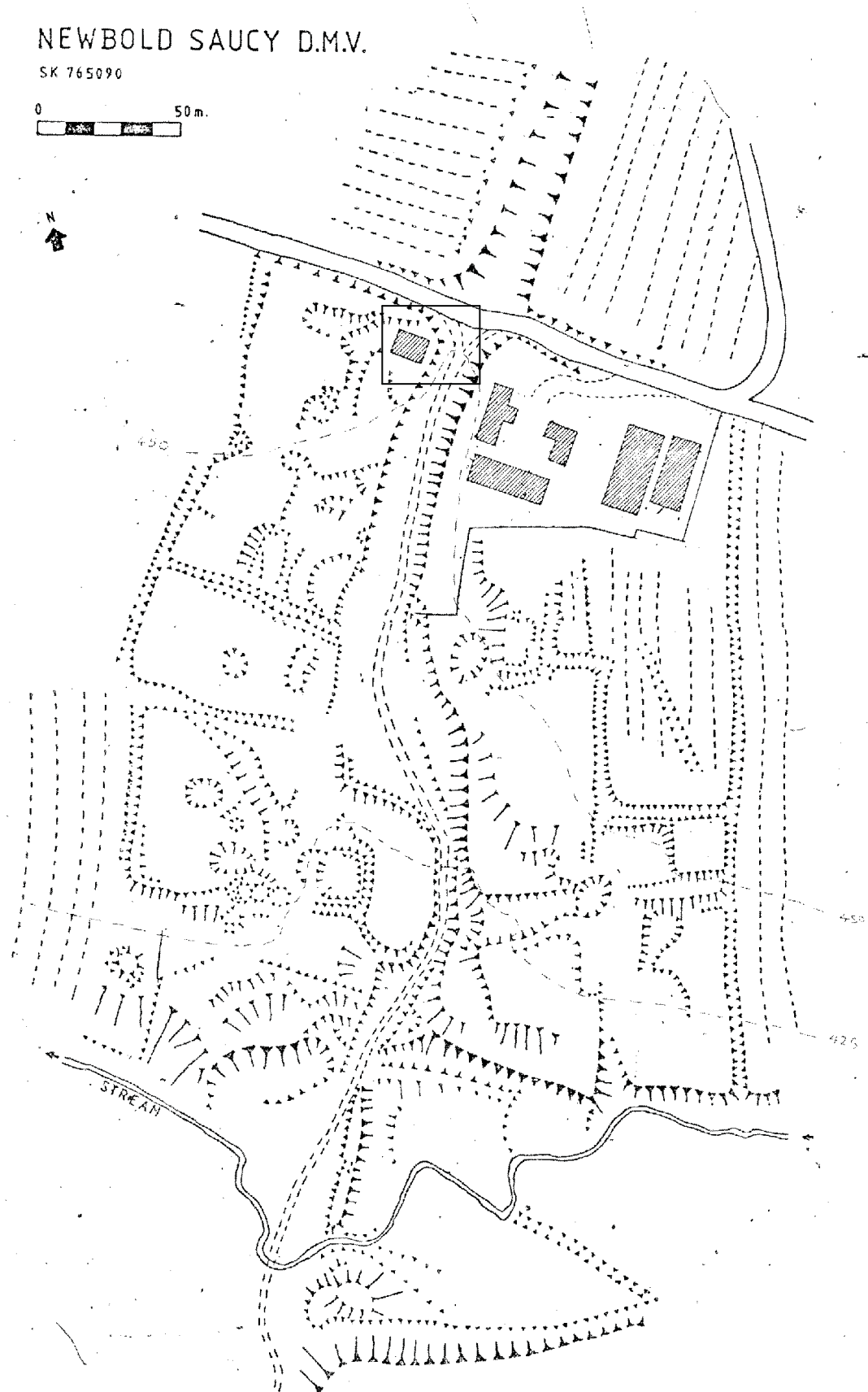


Figure 3 Plan of Newbold Saucy DMV prepared by R F Hartley (courtesy of LCC HER). Area of trench excavation (Fig. 4) outlined.

6. Methodology

6.1 All archaeological work adhered to the Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LMARS).

6.2 The archaeological watching brief carried out at Newbold, Owston and Newbold, Leicestershire (SK 765 090) involved control and supervision of ground disturbance to identify any deposits of archaeological importance.

6.3 The main objectives of the watching brief, through archaeological supervision of trench excavation and ground works by the client's contractors were:

1. To identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
3. To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
4. To produce an archive and report of any results.

6.4 All archaeological deposits located were hand cleaned and planned as appropriate. Samples of all archaeological deposits located were hand excavated. Measured drawings of all archaeological features were prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100. All plans were tied into the National Grid using an Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) where appropriate.

6.5 Archaeological deposits were excavated and recorded as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence of deposits, recognising and excavating structural evidence and recovering economic, artefactual and environmental evidence. Particular attention was paid to the potential for buried palaeosoils and waterlogged deposits in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.

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

7. Results

7.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the 3rd, 12th and 14th March 2007 at Newbold, Owston, Leicestershire (SK 765 090), during the groundwork excavation of trenching for a new underground electricity cable.

7.2 The excavation took place to the north and south of the 'T'-junction in the centre of Newbold (figs. 2, 3 and 4). The first area excavated (Trench 1) was located just to the south-west of the junction. Machining of this trench had taken place before

the relevant authorities had been informed. Therefore no archaeologist was present when machining took place.

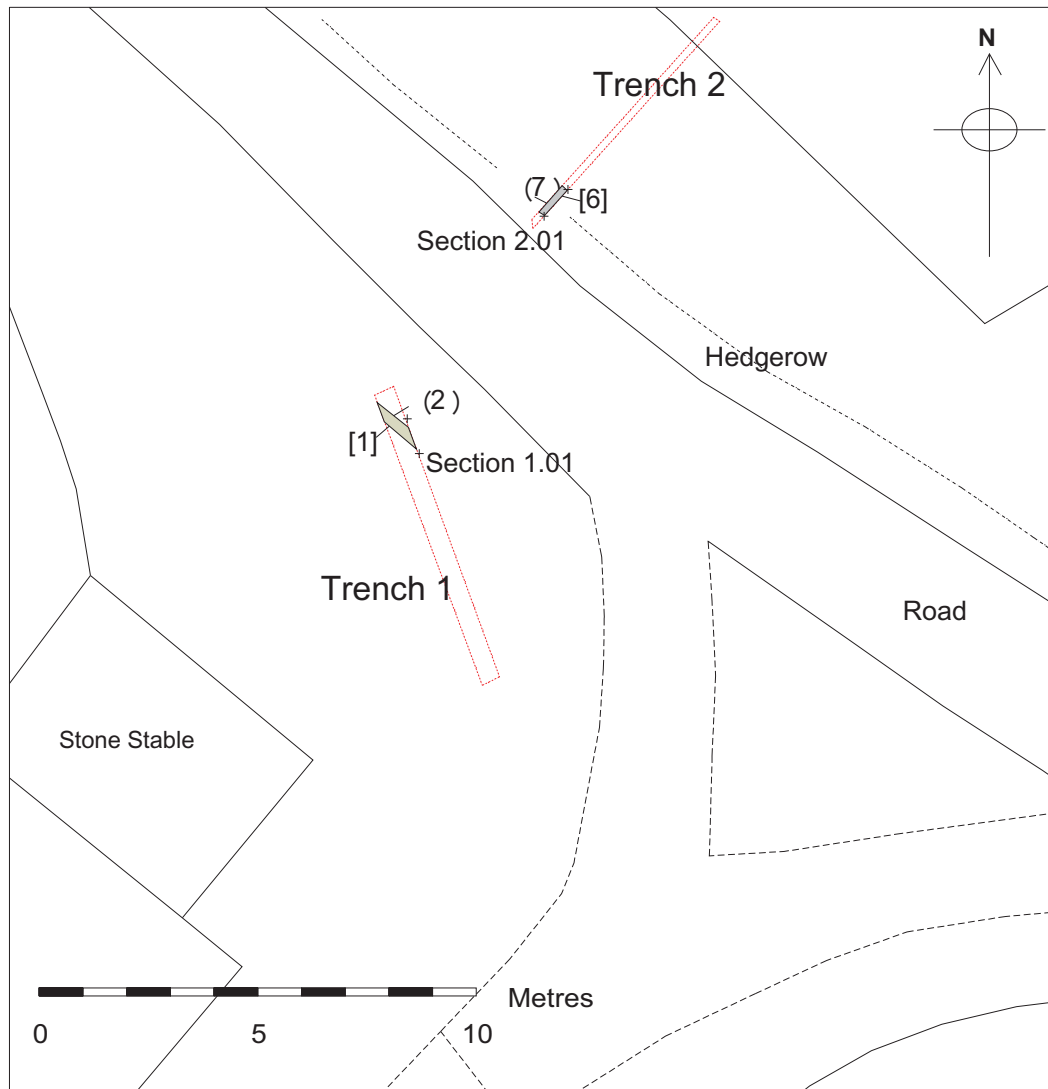


Fig. 4 Location of trenches 1 and 2 (see Figs 2-3)



Fig. 5 Trench 1 Sandstone Wall (2) looking south-west



Fig. 6 Trench 1 looking north-east with showing wall foundation

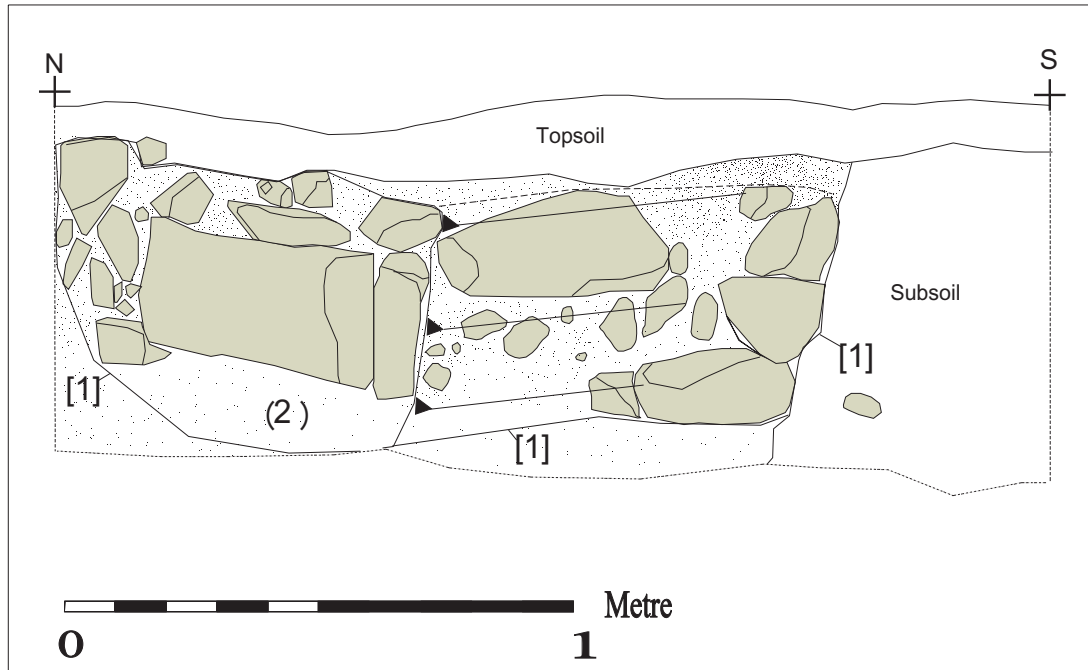


Figure 7 Trench 1 North-west facing section of wall [1] (Section 1.01)



Fig.8 Trench 1 General view from the east showing trench location with stone stable behind

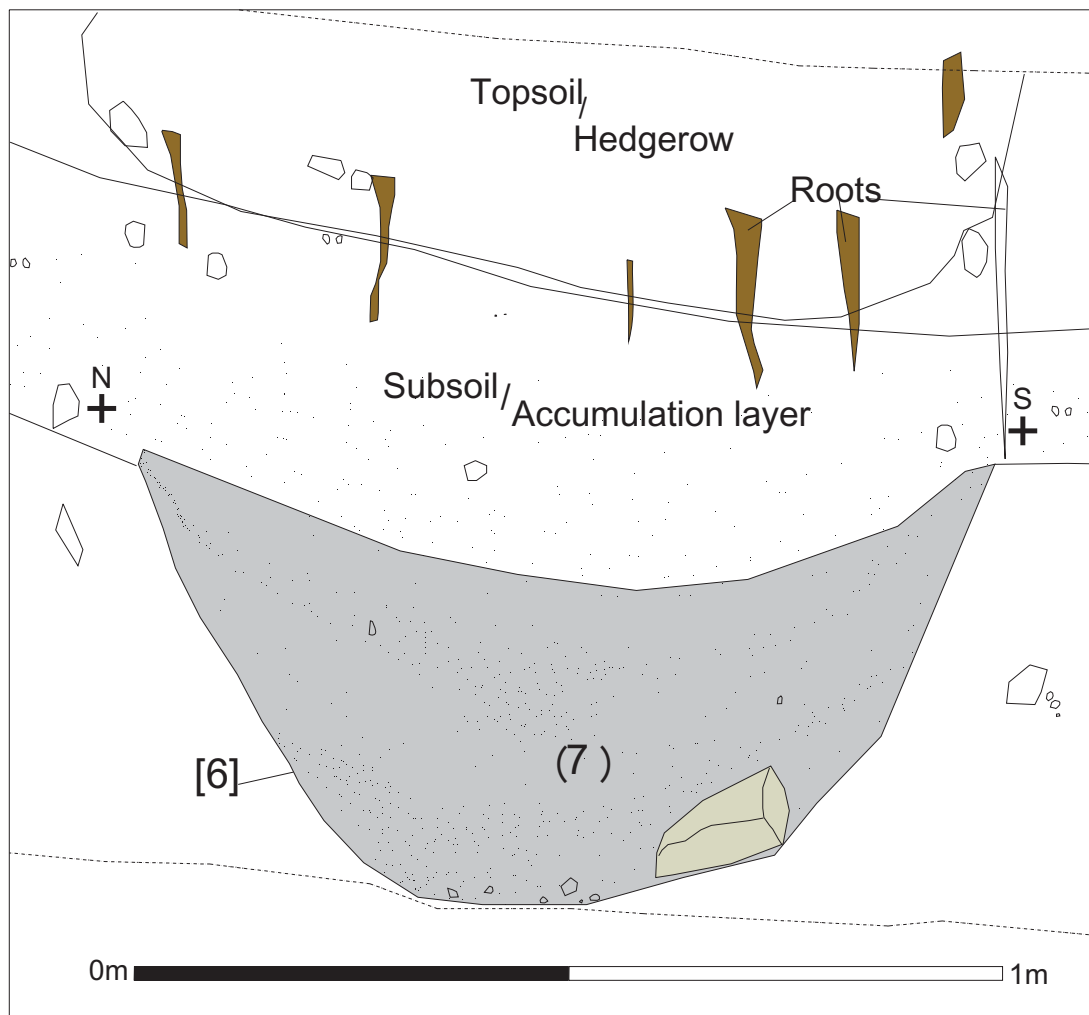


Fig.9: Trench 2. West facing section through ditch [6] (Section 2.01)

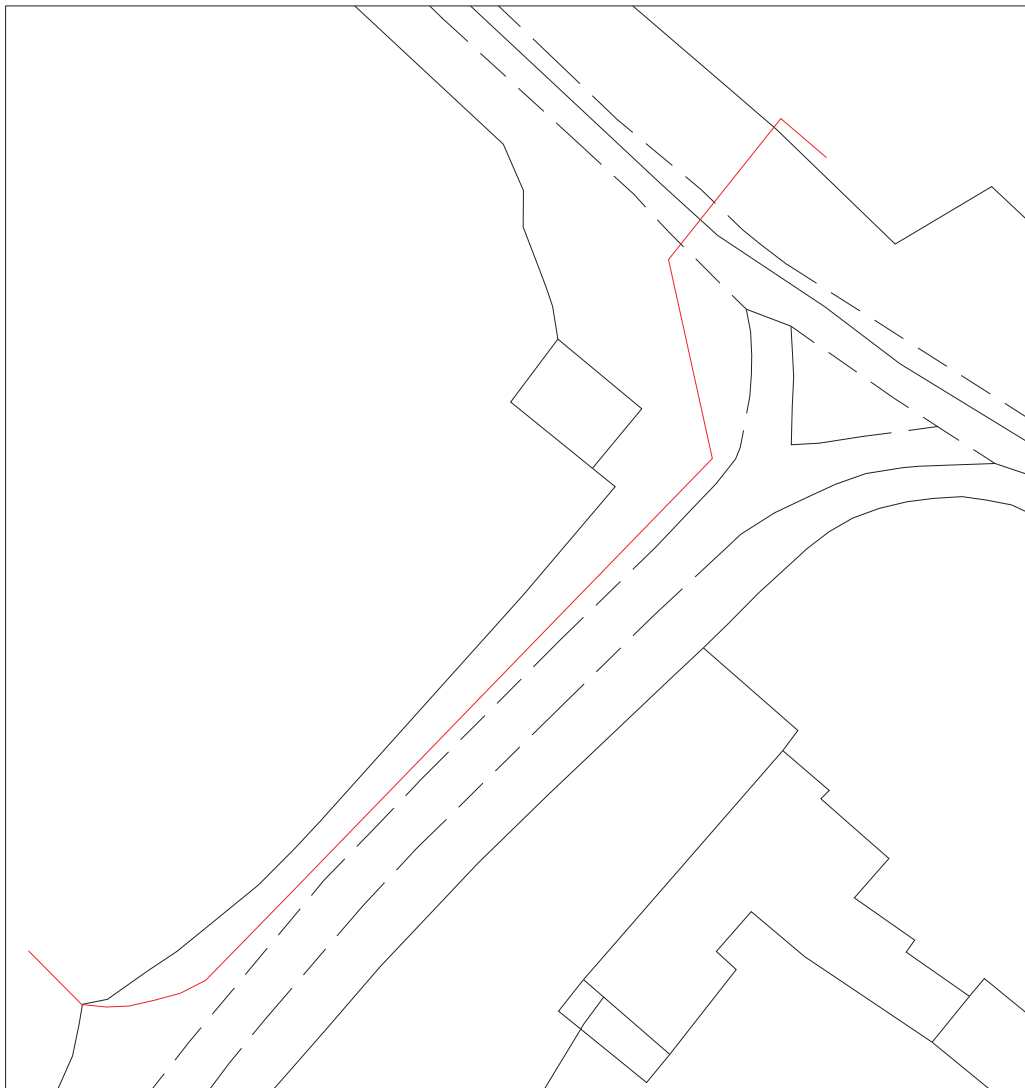


Fig. 10 Location of pipe trench

7.3 Trench 1 was located in the centre of the village just west of the ‘T-junction’ in Newbold orientated north-north-west/south-south-east and measured *c.* 7m long and *c.* 0.5m wide (fig.4). The stratigraphy of trench 1 comprised of dark brown silt loam topsoil to a depth of *c.* 0.2m. Further machining revealed brown orange silt clay subsoil, within which was observed a construction cut [1] to a depth of *c.* 0.6m and measuring *c.* 0.6m in width containing a sandstone wall footing (2), orientated northwest-southeast, running parallel with the road and composed of sandstone rubble, with clay silt bonding containing occasional charcoal flecks (fig.4 and 5). The sandstone rubble varied in size from *c.* 0.4m x 0.4m x 0.4m (max) to *c.* 0.1m x 0.1m x 0.1m (min). No finds were discovered from within fill (2).

7.4 In the area to the north of the junction was located a hedgerow. Here the excavation of trench 2 cut through the hedge from approximately north-east to south – west and measured *c.* 0.65m long and *c.* 0.3m wide (fig. 4). Initial machining revealed dark grey brown clay silt topsoil, to a depth of *c.* 0.3m. Below this layer was revealed mid/light silt clay subsoil with occasional rounded stones to a further depth of *c.* 0.3m.

At a depth of *c.*0.6 m the natural substratum was reached, which consisted of light orange brown clay. Through this layer was cut a ditch [6], *c.*0.7m deep (max) and *c.*1m wide, containing mid-greyish brown clay silt fill (7) with occasional rounded stones and charcoal flecks (fig.7). Also contained within the fill was a loose faced sandstone block measuring 0.4m x 0.4m x 0.1m. No pottery was uncovered within fill (7).

8. Discussion

8.1 Medieval to late medieval

8.1.1 Although no definitive dating was uncovered for the sandstone wall [1], (2); it most probably dates from this period. Anecdotal evidence suggests a medieval date. According to the owner, the stone stable located to the south-west of trench one (fig.3 + fig.6) was renovated from the remains of a chapel, which was supposedly rebuilt from the remains of an earlier medieval chapel. The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) indicated that a medieval chapel once stood within the village core which belonged to the Augustinian monastery in Owston. It is quite possible that these buildings were one and the same and if so, the stone wall footing (2) may well be the remains of the original medieval chapel, or possibly a boundary wall connected with the chapel.

8.1.2 The ditch [6] uncovered in trench two appears to be a medieval boundary ditch. The ditch contained fill (7) which appeared to have accumulated over time. This fill contained a dressed sandstone block similar to the stones found in ditch one making up wall (2). Fill (7) was sealed by a subsoil accumulation layer, above which was situated the modern boundary hedgerow which dates from the 18th Century enclosures. The stratigraphic record in trench two demonstrated that the medieval field boundary ditch [6] had been abandoned and had subsequently silted up (7). The accumulation layer above (7) suggests that the land had not been used for hundreds of years, demonstrating neglect of the site, until the hedgerow was added around the 18th century following the Enclosure Act.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The archaeological deposits in the centre of Newbold, Owston, Leicestershire, (SK 765 090) adds to the knowledge about the deserted medieval village of Newbold Saucy. The sandstone wall [1] (2) uncovered in trench one may relate to a medieval building and the owner believes it may be related to a chapel which is known to have stood in the village and could have actually been the remnants of one of the chapel walls. At least parts of this chapel were dismantled or robbed presumably after the village gradually became deserted by the 17th century. One block of faced sandstone was uncovered in trench one, in ditch (7).

9.2 The stratigraphy observed in trench two with an apparent natural build up of soil is consistent with accumulation following the abandonment of the medieval

village of Newbold Saucy and the later re-occupational land use and enclosure of the post-medieval period.

10. Acknowledgements

10.1 I would like to thank the clients, Central Networks PLC, for their assistance and co-operation on site. Patrick Clay managed the project and the fieldwork was carried out by the author with assistance from Dave Parker, both of ULAS.

11. Archive

11.1 The site archive consists of digital photographs, context sheets, permatrace drawings and three watching brief recording forms. The archive will be held with Leicestershire County Council Museums Section under accession number: [X.A201.2007].

| Digital Photographs | Index Sheets | Watching Brief Forms | Context Sheets | Permatrace Sheets |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 15 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 |

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