University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

Archaeological Excavations on land between Leicester Road and Dalby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire

By James Harvey

ULAS Report No 2010-215.

Archaeological Excavations on land between Leicester Road and Dalby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire

NGR: SK 7474 1870 (centre)

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For: Jelson Ltd.

Approved by

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James Harvey

Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services carried out an archaeological excavation and watching brief at the site of the former Melton Mowbray Police Station, off Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (centred on SK 7474 1870) between from October 2006 and June 2009. The work was undertaken as part of an archaeological mitigation strategy in advance of residential development.

The excavation was focussed within the southern part of the site and revealed evidence of Early Neolithic activity dating between 3790-3350 cal. BC consisting of three elongated pits forming a small grouped enclosure/structure. Although the true function of these features has not been ascertained the spatial arrangement of the features is reminiscent of other recorded small mortuary long barrows. However, the absence of finds indicative of ritual activity does make this interpretation tentative.

Later activity attributed to the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period was also recorded in the form of intercutting pits with associated metalwork debris and it is suggested these remains represent only a specific element of activity within a wider pattern of domestic farmstead settlement activity on the site.

The watching brief only produced limited evidence of any archaeological activity elsewhere on the site despite the potential highlighted by previous evaluation.

Records will be deposited with the Leicestershire County Council under the Accession no. X.A32.2006.

Introduction

Background

Jelson Ltd. has received planning permission for residential development on the former site of Melton Mowbray Police Station, off Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (SK 7474 1870; figs. 1 and 2).

Prior to planning permission being granted, in accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG 16, Archaeology and Planning), para.30 and Melton Borough Council Local Planning Authorities, an archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS Report No. 2001/015), which highlighted the potential for survival of significant archaeological remains within the area, noting in particular the proximity of 'The Mount' a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM17023), which functioned as a windmill mound in the post-medieval period, but may have been constructed originally as a Norman castle motte.

In the light of the potential identified by the desk-based assessment an initial phase of archaeological evaluation was undertaken during June 2001 that revealed a variety archaeological remains dating between the Neolithic to Saxo-Norman period (Finn 2001). A second phase of archaeological investigation was requested once the police station and

associated buildings had been demolished in order to clarify and character and extent of these remains, enabling a mitigation strategy to be formulated. As a result, the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council, on behalf of Melton Borough Council, requested that targeted excavation should be conducted in the areas where the Neolithic features were observed. In addition, it was requested that a watching brief be conducted during foundation works in the other areas where archaeological features had been recorded.

As a part of an archaeological condition of the planning permission a scheme of archaeological work was undertaken, prior to and during the development of the area.

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Jelson Ltd. to carry out the archaeological excavation and watching brief. The excavation was split into two phases. The first phase was undertaken from 13th November to the 15th December 2006 and the second phase was undertaken from the 7th to the 26th May 2009. The watching brief involved intermittent visits between October 2006 and June 2009.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The development site is located to the west of Melton Mowbray town centre, in north-east Leicestershire on land formerly occupied by the police station. It consists of an area of *c*. 4.39 ha that is bounded to the north by Leicester Road, to the east by Dalby Road, to the west by the former day care centre (now Halifax Drive residential development) and by the railway line to the south (centred on SK 7485 1880; figs. 1 and 2). The site was split into two study areas. Area 1 consisted of the land around the former police station on Leicester Road. Area 2, adjacent to this was an irregularly shaped piece of land extending as far east as Dalby Road, accessible from the Uplands.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 170 indicated that the underlying geology was likely to consist of clays. The evaluations have shown that overlying alluvium was widespread across the site and the underlying geology was generally a yellowish brown sandy-clay with pockets of gravel. The site lies at a height between *c*. 70-80 m OD.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Prior to the excavations during 2006 and 2008 the application area was investigated fully for its archaeological potential firstly by desk-based assessment in early 2001 followed by a trial trench evaluation later that year and further trial trenching in 2006.

Desk-based Assessment

A desk-based assessment was prepared by ULAS (Marsden 2001) that included a walkover survey. This identified the potential for survival of significant archaeological remains within the application area, noting in particular the proximity of 'The Mount', a Scheduled Ancient Monument, which functioned as windmill mound in the post-medieval period but may have been constructed originally as a Norman Castle Motte.

In the vicinity of the application area other known archaeological sites have also been recorded. This includes prehistoric activity including finds of late Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery and occupation from St Mary's Way, Mesolithic or Early Neolithic finds from a site west of Mowbray Court and Neolithic or early Bronze Age finds from a site south of Sysonby. Roman pottery and features have been found at King Street on a site south of Sysonby and a possible Roman cemetery at Butts Meadow. Anglo-Saxon evidence from this area of the town includes a brooch, pottery and possible occupation evidence from a site south

of Sysonby. The site is located to the south-west of the medieval town of Melton Mowbray which contains known medieval sites such as the occupation at Burton Street and the Church of St Mary.

The enclosure map for Melton Mowbray of 1761 showed that the application area had been separated into one large field to the west with several smaller enclosures adjacent to Dalby Road. The 1871 map of Melton shows buildings near the junction between Dalby Road and Leicester Road, which are also shown on subsequent OS maps, but had been demolished by 1991. The 1871 map shows the rest of the land as agricultural and trees are shown on the Mount. The OS maps of 1886 show a similar landscape to the 1871 map as do those of 1904 and 1930. The OS maps all show a pond just to the south of the Mount or Mound. The 1972 map shows the police station and police houses in the west of the area as well as two other small buildings. The 1991 map shows a platform to the south of the Mount which is still visible at present.

Trial Trench Evaluation

An initial phase of trial trenching in Area 1 during late 2001 located a concentration of archaeological features close to the western boundary of the ambulance station (Finn 2001). These features were typically shallow ditches and small pits cut into the natural subsoil. Most of the features were datable to the late Bronze Age–Iron Age period (first millennium BC), including evidence for at least one possible roundhouse structure in Trench 8 (2001). Reasonable quantities of pottery and flint, in addition to other finds such as a quern stone, suggest that the exposed features formed part of a settlement site. Additional trenching within Area 1 in 2006 revealed further evidence of archaeology in this area (Harvey 2006). Trench 5 and 6 (2006) revealed undated pits and post-holes that may have related to domestic settlement activity. Also towards the southern end of Trench 6 (2006), a large feature was observed that produced pottery dating to the Late Iron Age-Early Roman transitional period. This feature has been interpreted as a potentially large enclosure ditch corner. Several ditches including a possible enclosure corner were also identified in Trench 9 (2006).

Later activity was also identified within Area 1 of the site during the initial phase. Two ditches, one in Trench 2 (2001) and the other in Trench 8 (2001), produced single sherds of Early Anglo-Saxon pottery, datable to the 5th or 6th century AD.

Area 2 was topographically very varied. Prior to trenching a survey of the major earthworks was undertaken. Prehistoric features, apparently of Late Neolithic date, were exposed in the south-west corner of the field in Trench 17 (2001). These included a shallow sub-rectangular pit or post-hole and immediately adjacent to this an unexcavated pit that was partially exposed within the trench. Both of these features were apparently cut by a large, fairly shallow (0.18m deep) scoop or hollow. The two features produced finds including a sherd of late Neolithic Peterboroughware pottery, a flint fragment, identified as a possible bladelet core and five other pieces of flint, all of which were technologically consistent with a Neolithic date.

Elsewhere in Area 2 evidence attributable to more recent activity was established. Trench 11 (2001), in the east of the area, adjacent to Dalby road, exposed remains associated with 19th century housing which had previously occupied this street frontage. Both this trench and the adjacent Trench 10 (2001) contained evidence of recent dumping of rubble on the site. Trench 12 (2001) was positioned to investigate a substantial earthwork platform in the centre of the area, this proved to be relatively recent in origin, again a result of dumping on the site. Trenches 16-18 & 22 (2001) were located to investigate the earthworks in the field adjacent to the railway line, in the south of the area. The large depression in this field proved to be the result of post-medieval quarrying. Post-medieval quarries were also located in Trenches 13 and 14 (2001). The only features uncovered by Trench 15: a pit and possible ditch, were again post-medieval in date. Trenches 19-21 (2001) were positioned to investigate the area immediately adjacent to “The Mount”. The evidence from these trenches does not support the

interpretation of this feature as a Norman castle motte. There was no sign of an encircling ditch and, furthermore, the extremely soft and wet sand natural substratum in this area would have made it virtually impossible to maintain such a ditch as an open feature. The Mount certainly functioned as a windmill mound in the post-medieval period, evidenced by various late 18th and early 19th century maps and it is possible that this was actually the original function of the earthwork. The larger than usual size of the mound may be due to the fact that it was constructed over very soft, damp ground. It is not inconceivable that what is now a pond, a short distance to the south-east of the mound, was the quarry pit that provided the material used to construct it, although this is merely speculation (Finn 2001, 16).

Aims and Methodology

Project Aims

Following the desk-based assessment and trial trench evaluation, the site was identified as having the potential to address a number of research aims, both regional and national, as defined in *The Archaeology of the East Midlands. An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Cooper (ed.) 2006; Willis 2006).

The excavation had the potential to contribute to the following research questions:

- ***The transition to farming during the Neolithic period.*** Settlement evidence during the Neolithic-Early Bronze Age is very occasional nationally. The site may have the potential to analyse the environment and economy of such settlements and assess the role of agriculture in the 3rd and early 2nd millennium BC (Clay 2006).

- ***Iron Age settlement in the east Midlands.*** The site has the potential to provide important comparative information in relation to trading patterns, contact, land use and economy during this period and compliment the work at similar sites for example, Enderby, Humberstone, Hamilton North, Kirby Muxloe and Crown Hills (e.g. Clay 1992, Charles et al 2000, Cooper 1994, Meek et al 2004).

- ***The nature of Anglo-Saxon societies.*** The site may have the potential to contribute to our understanding of early Anglo-Saxon occupation. This is very occasional in Leicestershire although the Melton area is one of the few to provide significant information from this period at Eye Kettleby (Finn 1999). The relationship of this settlement with the origins of Melton are potentially of great importance (Vince 2006).

The objective of the archaeological work was to ascertain whether any significant archaeological remains are present and characterise their nature within the area to be developed. The archaeological remains to be affected by the proposed development were to be recorded to establish their location, extent, date, significance, quality and state of preservation.Specifically the excavation will aim to identify any evidence for prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon activity, identify whether it was occupation or agricultural, establish a chronology and identify how this activity might fit into a wider pattern of prehistoric activity in mid-Leicestershire.

Methodology

The scheme for archaeological work involved open area excavation in the south-eastern area where Neolithic and Anglo-Saxon material had been located during the evaluation. This work

was undertaken in two phases due to a large quantity of soil having been previously stored on the designated excavation area. A watching brief attendance was agreed for the north-western area (phase 1) where potential Iron Age remains were located. The work followed the written scheme of investigation set out in the *Design Specification for archaeological excavation and watching brief: Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire* (Clay 2006, hereinafter 'Specification')

Open area excavation

The topsoil and subsoil was removed in spits by machine with toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision, until archaeological deposits or undisturbed substrata are encountered.

Each excavation area was subject to partial hand cleaning, in order to clearly define the archaeological remains present. Where confirmed archaeological remains existed they were excavated, planned to scale and recorded. Any discrete features were half sectioned and linear features were sampled, as appropriate to provide an adequate sample in order to address the research aims. Archaeological features were recorded with reference to the ULAS recording manual.

The first phase of the excavation areas was located using an Electronic Distance Measurer linked to a hand-held Psion data logger and the data was processed using N4ce survey software. The second phase of excavation was located using a Topcon GPS+ Survey Station. The data was processed using Topcon Tools and Topcon Link 7.1. Final digital plans were produced using TurboCAD version 15.1 software and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum.

Watching brief

The foundation trenches for the dwellings were excavated using a JCB 3CX excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket attached to the back actor. The exposed base of trench and natural substratum was inspected for any archaeological features or deposits and, whenever safe to do, so the spoil checked for unstratified finds.

All deposits were recorded by notes and sketches using the standard ULAS pro-forma watching brief recording forms. Plans and sections of any archaeological features were also made at the appropriate scales. Digital colour photographs were taken throughout the work.

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Excavation*, and the Guidelines and Leicestershire County Council's *Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LCC 1997).

Excavation Results

Note: Archaeological contexts as a cut are indicated by square brackets e.g [74], while those that are fills or layers are in indicated by round brackets e.g (61).

Open Excavation

The area designated for open area excavation had to be reduced in size from the plan set out in the Specification for two reasons. A fence had been erected along the southern boundary (adjacent to the railway line) that meant the new site boundary was between 7-10m north of the previous one with the land to the south remaining un-impacted by the development. Secondly much of the northern part of the site was also not excavated as this had already been severely truncated during the construction of a large sewer main before the excavation had

been scheduled. However much of the ground lost to the eastern side of the previous field boundary (in Area 2) would have already been truncated due to the earlier quarrying that had taken place in this field. A total of *c*. 0.21ha was excavated within the designated excavation area.

Excavation Phase 1

The first phase of excavation was undertaken between the 13th November 2006 and the 15th December 2006. The excavation area was roughly rectangular, measuring *c*.55m x *c*.20m (figs. 2 and 3). Given the limited area excavated the recorded archaeology has not been placed into groups.

Gully [31], [74] *Figure 3*

A single gully was recorded that cut across the excavation area on a north-west to south-east alignment (fig.3). Its recorded length measured 32m and it varied in width between 500-800mm. The two excavated slots revealed steep, straight sides with an incline of 40-70º and a reasonably flat base. It measured 240mm deep and was filled by a dark greyish brown sandy-silt deposit. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Pit [30] *Figure 3*

Pit [30] was located on the southern boundary of the excavation area, immediately south of gully [31]/[74] (fig. 3). It was oval in plan, measuring 2.15m in length 900mm in width and 200mm deep. Its sides were steep with an incline of *c*.45º and it had a flat base. The pit was orientated east-west and was filled by a mid-brown silty sand deposit that contained three flints including a sharp bladelet but no further dating material.

Post-hole [28] *Figure 3*

Post-hole/pit [28] was located on the southern boundary of the site (fig.3). It was sub-circular in plan, it measured 440mm in length, 360mm in width and was only 50mm deep. Its sides were very shallow and its base was slightly concave. It was filled by a mid brown silty sandy clay deposit that contained occasional charcoal flecks. No finds were recovered from this deposit.

Intercutting pits/Structure? (Figures 3-5; Plates 1-3)

A complex group of intercutting pits was recorded immediately north-east of gully [31]/[74] on the southern edge of the excavation area. A matrix has been drawn up in order to illustrate the stratigraphic relationships recorded (fig. 6)

Plate 1: Pre-excavation of intercutting pit group

The largest feature consisted of an ovoid pit [38] that measured 2.7m x 1.9m and was between 700mm-1.2m deep. Its sides were poorly defined although the eastern side was steep and sloping at a *c*.70º angel that seemed to break to a vertical cut towards the base. The base appeared to be concave but again was poorly defined and may have been overcut. Thirteen separately identifiable fills were identified within this feature although these were mainly only identified in section (pl. 2). The lowest fill consisted of a mid-yellowish brown clay-sand deposit (59) that contained occasional angular stones. Its thickness varied between 50-350mm and was poorly defined against the side of the feature, perhaps suggesting it was overcut natural substratum. Above this was a mid-greyish brown clay-silt-sand deposit (60) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small angular stones. This varied in thickness between 50-160mm and may well represent the primary fill of the feature. A single flint flake was recovered from this deposit. It was overlain by a mid-yellowish brown sandy-clay deposit (61) that measured between 20-180mm thick and probably represents natural slumping into the pit. This was overlain by a dark greyish brown sandy-silt deposit (62) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded/sub-angular stones. This varied in thickness between 50-200mm and was overlain by a dark orangey brown silty-sand deposit (63). This varied in thickness between 10-50mm and was overlain by a dark orangey brown sandy-silt deposit (64) that contained abundant charcoal flecks and occasional small/medium sub-rounded/sub-angular stones. A very small sherd of transitional first century AD pottery and a residual serrated flint blade were recovered from this deposit. It measured between 150-350mm in thickness and was overlain by a dark orangey brown silty-sand deposit (65) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small angular stones. This varied in thickness between 30-150mm and was overlain by a dark greyish brown sandy-silt deposit (66) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones. This varied in thickness between 50-180mm and was overlain by a mid-brownish grey sandy silt deposit (67) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones. This varied in thickness between 20-90mm and was overlain by a dark greyish brown clayey silt deposit (68) that also contained occasional charcoal flecks and occasional small sub-rounded stones. It varied in thickness between 90-150mm and was overlain by a mid-yellowish brown clay-sand deposit (69) that varied in thickness between 30-50mm. It was overlain by a dark greyish brown silt-sandy-clay deposit (70) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small angular stones. It varied in thickness between 40-80mm and was overlain by a dark greyish brown sandy-silt deposit (39). This upper deposit contained a single sherd of Mid-Late Iron Age scored ware pottery as well as a large quantity of presumably residual flint material including a crested

bladelet. (Some of this material is likely to have come from lower fills within the feature that were only identified in the excavated section).

Plate 2: Section through pit [38]

Pit [78] was roughly oval in plan. It measured 1.5m x 1.3m and was 300mm deep. Its sides were concave and it had an uneven base. It was filled by a mid-greyish brown sandy-clay deposit (79) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones. A small assemblage of pottery was recovered from this feature including Mid-Late Iron Age scored ware and transitional first century AD pottery. A residual flint flake was also recovered from the deposit. This feature truncates the northern side of pit [38]. Within the base of this feature were three circular depressions, [80], [82] and [84] that were recorded as post-holes with depths of 150mm, 100mm and 70mm respectively but they are more likely to be depressions within the base of the feature. The deposits recorded in these depression, (81), (83) and (85) respectively were exactly the same as (79) with (83) containing a rim sherd from a scored ware vessel.

Pit/Structure [37] was located immediately north-east of pit [78]. Its shape was unusual, being partly rectangular at the south-western end and double pronged at the north-eastern end. The feature measured 2m x 1.4m and was between 200-440mm deep (pl. 3). Its sides were mostly vertical although the southern side was shallower with a *c.* 60º incline. The base was flat at the north-eastern end that broke to a deeper flat area at the opposite south-western end. It was filled by a mid-brown sandy silt-clay deposit (36) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded/sub-angular stones. A small assemblage of transitional first century AD pottery was recovered from this deposit as well as a reasonable quantity of residual flint. A possible post-hole [35] was located in the eastern corner of the feature (within the southern of the two prongs at the north-eastern end of the feature). It was sub-circular in plan, measuring 570mm x 500mm and was 380mm in depth from the top of [37], the base being 150mm below the base of [37]. It was filled by a dark brown silty sandy-clay deposit (34) that was very similar to (36). A single base sherd of transitional first century AD pottery was recovered from this feature as well as two residual flints including a knife blade. The northern prong on feature [37] showed no evidence of deeper cutting but both prongs could have acted as postholes within this feature. A further possible post-hole [75] was located at the south western end of the feature but had been severely truncated by later pitting. It measured

>450mm in diameter and >190mm in depth. Its remaining sides were steep and sloping, with an incline of *c*.75º although none of the base of the feature remained. It was filled by a dark greyish brown silty-sand deposit containing occasional charcoal flecks and small angular stones.

Plate 3: Post-excavation of pit [37]

Pit [40] was ovoid in plan. It measured 1.6m x 900mm and was 450mm deep. Its sides were steep and straight and it was filled by four separate deposits. The primary fill (41) consisted of a dark orangey brown silty sandy-clay deposit (44) containing occasional small angular stones and had a maximum thickness of 100mm. The secondary deposit (42) consisted of a dark brown silty sandy-clay containing occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-angular stones. It was between 130-200mm thick and was overlaid by an upper deposit (43) of mid-orangey brown sandy-clay similar to the natural substratum, perhaps suggesting side slumping. It was a maximum of 50mm thick and was overlaid by a top deposit (44) consisting of dark greyish brown silty sandy-clay containing abundant charcoal flecks. It measured between 50-180mm thick (although machine truncated) and contained two flints including a small core. This feature would appear later in the sequence of pitting, truncating pits [37], [38], [75] and [78].

Pit [48] was located at the south-western end of the pit cluster. It was sub-rectangular in plan with curved corners. It measured 1.6m x 1.5m and was 390mm deep. Its sides were generally concave and the base was relatively flat. An undercut [87] had been made into the natural clay within the south-west corner of the feature that would appear contemporary. It was sub-circular in shape and measured 850mm x 680mm and was 500mm deep. The exposed sides and base within pit [48] were concave. The feature undercut the natural from 250mm below the top of [48]. The undercut extended under the natural for 270mm and was concave in shape. The main pit was filled by three separately identifiable deposits. The primary fill consisted of a light brown sandy-clay deposit (47) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones. A small quantity of transitional first century AD pottery was recovered from this context as well as a residual flint. It was a maximum of 190mm thick and was overlain by a dark greyish brown silty sandy-clay deposit (46). This deposit contained a large quantity of charcoal (*c*.40%) as well as large quantities of vitrified clay from hearth lining and possible crucible fragments as well as a small quantity of iron tap slag. The deposit also contained a small quantity of Mid-Late Iron Age scored ware and transitional first century AD pottery and some residual flint. The upper fill consisted of an orangey brown sandy-clay deposit (45) with occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones. A large cobble measuring 130mm x 80mm was also recorded within the deposit. The undercut within the south-west corner of the feature had two separately identifiable fills. The primary fill

consisted of a dark greyish brown sandy silty-clay deposit (86) that contained abundant charcoal and burnt clay. This deposit was 70mm thick and was overlaid by a dark greyish brown silty sandy-clay deposit (85) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones. This deposit measured 170mm thick but its true extent was unclear as the interface with (47) was not identified prior to its excavation.

Immediately north of pit [48] was a machine truncated pit/post-hole [55]. Measuring 500mm x 440mm and 130mm deep, its sides and base were concave and it was filled by two clearly identifiable deposits. The primary fill consisted of a light brown silty-sand deposit (54) that contained occasional small sub-rounded stones. This measured a maximum of 60mm and was overlain by a dark grey silty-clay deposit (53) that was charcoal rich (*c*.40%) and also contained small angular stones. Lead droplet waste and pottery dating to the transitional first century AD were also recorded within this context.

Pit/Post-hole [49] was ovoid in plan. It measured 690mm x 480mm x 160mm deep with concave sides and base and it was filled by a dark greyish brown clayey-silt deposit that contained abundant charcoal flecks. A small quantity of vitrified clay was also recovered from this context. This feature truncates earlier pits [40] and [78], suggesting it is late in the stratigraphic sequence.

Immediately south of pit/post-hole [49] was another small pit [51] that had been machine truncated. The remains appeared oval in plan and measured >400mm x >100mm and was >130mm deep. Its remaining sides and base were concave. It was filled by a dark greyish brown clay-silt deposit (52) that contained abundant charcoal flecks. A single sherd of pottery (jar base) dating to the Mid-Late Iron Age was recovered from this deposit. This feature truncates earlier pit [78] and probably feature [38].

Immediately north of pit/post-hole [49], a larger elongated pit [56] was recorded. It measured 1.3m x 600mm and was 100mm deep. Its ends, along with the northern side were shallow with an incline of *c*.30º, the southern side was steeper with an incline of *c*.60º. The feature had a reasonably flat base and was filled by a dark greyish brown sandy clay-silt deposit (57) that contained abundant charcoal flecks, occasional fire-cracked pebbles and small sub-rounded stones. Fragments of vitrified clay probably from a hearth lining were also recovered from this deposit. This feature truncates earlier pit [78].

Feature [71] was located immediately north of the intercutting features. It was oval in plan, measuring 1.4m x 520mm and was 80mm deep. Although reasonably regular in plan, its sides were shallow and irregular. Its base was flat in some areas but irregular elsewhere. It was filled by a dark orangey brown silty sandy-clay deposit (72) that contained occasional large angular stones. This feature may well be natural in origin although a flint flake was recovered from its fill.

Plate 4: Post-excavation of intercutting pit group

Excavation Phase 2

The second phase of excavation was undertaken between the 7th and 26th May 2009. The excavation area was also rectangular, measuring *c*.47m x 22m and was located east of the first phase, slightly overlapping the edge of the previous strip (figs. 2 and 7).

Three similarly shaped large pits were recorded in apparent spatial association, creating a semi-enclosed arrangement with a north-west facing opening (figs. 7-12; pl. 5-10).

Plate 5: Excavation in progress of large pit group

Pit [92] *Figures 7-9; Plates 6-7*

Pit [92] was the northernmost of the three recorded large pits and is the same feature that was recorded as 'a hollow' within Trench 17 (2001) although its full extent within the trench was not ascertained during the evaluation. Its shape in plan was sub-rectangular, partially irregular and was orientated north-west to south-east. It measured 8.5m in length and its width varied from 2.1m at the ends of the feature to 3.8m towards its centre. The south-west side was reasonably straight and the north-east side was straight to east, becoming curved to the west. The south-west end narrowed and became irregular and the north-east end was fairly straight but had been truncated by the evaluation trench. There was much variation in the profile of the sides. The south-west side was regular and steep and straight with an incline of *c*.50º. The north-east side broke at an incline of *c*.30º from the edge, becoming shallower to *c*.20º before breaking again to 30º towards the base. The base was undulating but given the size of the base it was reasonably flat. Three separately identifiable fills were identified within the feature. A small primary fill was located within the centre of the feature that consisted of a light yellowish brown silty-clay deposit (93) containing a single sherd of Neolithic pottery. This deposit was 50mm thick and was overlain by a dark greyish brown clay-silt deposit (94) containing frequent charcoal flecks, occasional small/medium sub-rounded/sub-angular stones and a reasonably large quantity (*c*.4%) of large cobbles, the average size of these stones was *c*. 120x100x70mm. There no evidence of structure was recorded in their placing within the feature or any evidence that they had been utilized through heating. Again a small quantity of Neolithic ware pottery was recovered from this deposit as well as sixteen worked flints including two tools and two core fragments that re-fitted. The upper fill consisted of a mid-greyish brown silty sandy-clay deposit (95) containing occasional charcoal flecks and occasional small sub-rounded/sub-angular stones. A reasonable quantity of Neolithic pottery was recovered from this deposit as well as a large quantity of flint (48 pieces) including four bladelets and a scraper. A fragment of hawthorn charcoal also recovered from this deposit was radiocarbon dated to 3620–3350 cal BC (Ua-50194: ^{14}C age 4648±38BP).

Plate 6: Cross-section through Pit [92]

A stake-hole and two possible post-holes were recorded in possible association with this feature. Stake-hole [139] was located immediately north of the pit. It was sub-circular in plan, measured 200mm x 140mm and 180mm deep. Its sides were steep and sloping and it tapered to a point. It was filled by a dark greyish brown silty-clay deposit (140) that contained

frequent charcoal flecks and occasional small sub-rounded/sub-angular stones. Possible post-hole [141] was located on the north-east edge of pit [92] although its true relationship with the pit is uncertain. It was circular in plan, measuring 170mm in diameter and 60mm deep. Its sides and base were concave and it was filled by a light greyish brown silty-clay deposit (142) that contained occasional small sub-angular stones. A similar feature [143] was located at the south-east end of pit [92]. It was semi-circular in plan, measuring 440mm x 280mm and was only 40mm deep. There were no clear sides and the remaining base was flat. It was filled by a mid-greyish brown silty sandy clay deposit (144) that contained occasional small sub-angular stones.

Plate 7: Pit [100] post-excavation

Later disturbance was also recorded within pit [92]. During the evaluation a small unexcavated pit was recorded within Trench 17 (previously recorded as [98] (99) and subsequently renumbered [96] (97)). Although the precise stratigraphic nature of the features was not determined during the evaluation, it was clearly seen that the small pit [96] truncated [92]. It was oval, measured 650mm in length, 440mm in width and was 160mm deep. Its western side was sloping with an incline of *c*.50º. The eastern side was shallow towards the top with an incline of *c*.45º breaking to *c*.70º and it had a reasonably flat base. It was filled by a dark greyish brown silty-clay deposit (97) containing occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-angular stones. Unfortunately the pit contained no finds.

Pit [100] *Figures 7,10 and 11; Plates 8-9*

Pit [100] was the most complex of the three recorded pits. The feature was sub-rectangular in plan with curved corners and it was orientated north-east to south-west. It measured 6.6m in length, varied in width between 2.3-3m and was a maximum of 650mm deep. The north-west side was reasonably straight in plan although the south-east side curved in towards the centre of the feature. The north-east end of the feature was straight but the south-west end was more curved. The sides were varied, the north-east end was relatively shallow with an incline of 40º. The sides become steeper and straighter towards the south-west end with an incline of up to *c*.70º. The base was fairly flat although it did slope down towards the south-west end. It did have shallow undulations although this may have been the result of the poorly defined interface with the natural geology. Four separately identifiable fills were recorded within this feature. A primary fill that consisted of mid-orangey brown sandy-clay deposit (99) was recorded on the base of the feature. It contained frequent small sub-rounded stones and was a maximum of 260mm thick. It did contain two very small sherds of pottery but given its poor definition with the natural geology it is suggested that it may represent an overcut into the natural substratum rather that a deposit within the feature itself. The deposit was overlain by a mid-brownish grey clay-silt deposit (98) that contained occasional charcoal flecks, frequent

small-large sub-rounded stones and a small quantity (*c*.3%) of large cobbles. The deposit was a maximum of 400mm thick and contained Neolithic pottery and a large amount of worked flint (74 pieces) including blades, a scraper and a piercer. A fragment of elder charcoal from this deposit was radiocarbon dated to 3790–3640 cal BC (Ua-50193: ^{14}C age 4930±38BP). Two additional fills were recorded against the south-west side of the feature. The primary fill consisted of a mid-orangey brown silty-clay deposit that contained frequent inclusions of large sub-angular stones and occasional small-large sub-rounded stones. This deposit was a maximum of 450mm thick but its boundary with the natural geology was very poor that may have resulted in overcutting. This deposit was overlaid by a mid-orangey brown silty-clay deposit (104) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and frequent small-large sub-rounded stones. This deposit was >230mm thick but had been potentially truncated by later feature [135].

Plate 8: Pit [100] quadrant sectioned

A number of possible post-holes/stake-holes that were arranged in a broadly north-east to south-west alignment were recorded in association with this feature. However the majority of these features were extremely ephemeral and are more likely to reflect undulations within the cut of [100] rather than being features in their own right. A large sub-circular post-hole [129] was recorded in the north-west corner of the large pit. It measured 750mm x 650mm and was 310mm deep (extending 120mm below the base of the pit). Its sides and base were concave and it was filled by a mid-greyish brown clay-sand-silt deposit (130) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones. Two worked flints were recovered from this deposit including a bladelet. Directly adjacent to the south another similar sized post-hole [131] was recorded although the relationship between the two features was not identifiable. This measured 730mm x 510mm and 250mm deep. Its sides were steep and straight with an incline of *c*.60º and its base was concave. It was filled by a mid-greyish brown clay-sand-silt deposit (132) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones and which could not be distinguished from fill (130). Immediately south a group of possible smaller post-holes were recorded in the base of the pit. Post-hole [127] was sub-circular, measuring 340mm x 260mm and 120mm deep. The sides were shallow and the base sloped to the south-west. It was filled by a mid-greyish brown clay-sand-silt deposit (128) that contained occasional small rounded pebbles. A small quantity of Neolithic pottery was recovered from this context. Immediately south was another similarly sized sub-circular

post-hole [125]. Its sides were very shallow and it had a flat base. It was filled by a greyish brown clayey sandy silt (126) that was identical to (128). Another post-hole [123] was recorded immediately west. It was circular, measuring 200mm in diameter and 50mm deep. Its sides and base were concave and it was filled by a mid-orangey brown clay-silt deposit (124) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones. Post-hole [121] was located 200mm to the south-west. It was oval in plan and measured 340mm x 200mm and 60mm deep. Its sides and base were concave and it was filled by a orangey brown clay-silt deposit (122) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones (same as 124). Immediately east was a similarly shaped larger post-hole [133]. It measured 630mm x 330mm and 80mm deep. Its sides were very shallow and its base was concave. It was filled by a mid-greyish brown clayey sandy-silt deposit (134) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded stones.

A stake-hole [137] was located close to the north-west side of the large pit [100]. It was sub-circular in plan, measuring 210mm x 150mm and 100mm deep. Its sides and base were concave and it was filled by a dark greyish brown clayey sandy-silt deposit (138) that contained occasional small sub-rounded pebbles. Two small stake-holes, [148] and [150] were recorded in the base of the pit at the south-west end. Stake-hole [148] measured 120mm in diameter and 100mm deep. Its sides were steep and straight with an incline of *c*. 60º and its base tapered to a point. It was filled by a filled by a dark greyish brown clayey sandy-silt deposit (147) that contained occasional small sub-rounded pebbles. A possible stake-hole [150] was located 200mm to the south. It was circular, measuring 160mm in diameter and 50mm deep. Its sides were shallow and it had a flat base. It was also filled by a dark greyish brown clayey sandy-silt deposit (149) that contained occasional small sub-rounded pebbles.

Plate 9: Possible post-holes recorded at the north-east end of pit p[100]

A further group of possible post-holes/stake-holes were recorded in the south-east side of pit [100]. Stake-hole [110] was located on the edge of [100]. It measured 230mm in diameter and 90mm deep. Its sides and base were concave and it was filled by a dark greyish brown sandy-clay deposit (109) containing occasional small sub-rounded pebbles. Possible post-holes [111], [113], [115], [117] and [119] were cut into the side of pit [100]. Post-hole [111] was located immediately north of [110]. It was sub-oval in plan and measured 520mm x 260mm and 80mm deep. Its sides and base were concave and it was filled by a mid-orangey brown clayey-silt deposit (112) containing occasional small sub-rounded pebbles and charcoal flecks. A single sherd of Neolithic pottery was recovered from this deposit. Post-hole [113] was located 400mm to the east. It was circular in plan, measuring 350mm in diameter and 60mm deep. Its sides were sloping with an incline of *c*.40º and it had a concave base. It was

also filled by a mid-orangey brown clay-silt deposit (114) containing occasional small sub-rounded pebbles and charcoal flecks. Post-hole [115] was located immediately north. It was sub-oval in plan, measuring 610mm x 350mm and 60mm deep. Its sides and base were concave. It was also filled by mid-orangey brown clay-silt deposit (116) containing occasional small sub-rounded pebbles. Immediately north a similar sub-oval post-hole [117] was recorded. It measured 530mm x 200mm and 50mm deep. Its sides were sloping with an incline of *c*.40º and it had a slightly concave base. It was also filled by a similar mid-orangey brown clay-silt deposit (118) containing occasional small sub-rounded pebbles. A stake-hole [119] was located 250mm to the north-east. It measured 100mm in diameter and 50mm deep. Its sides and base were concave and it was filled by mid-orangey brown clay-silt deposit (120) containing occasional small sub-rounded pebbles and charcoal flecks.

There was evidence of later disturbance within the feature. A larger pit/post-hole [135] was located towards the centre of the large pit. It was circular in plan, measuring 700mm in diameter and 520mm deep. It was filled by a mid-greyish brown clayey sandy-silt deposit (136) that contained occasional small rounded pebbles. It was only seen as a later cut when the section was recorded after heavy rain had soaked the site and it is likely that any finds associated with this feature may have been mixed with the earlier fill of the large pit (98).

Pit [101] *Figures 7, 12 and 13; Plate 10*

This feature was not clearly visible during machining and probably suffered a certain level of truncation as the interface between subsoil and the undisturbed natural substratum was so indistinctive within this part of the site. The feature was linear and oval shaped, although the sides were irregular and indistinct in parts. It measured 8.5m in length and its width varied from 1.2m at the ends of the feature to 3m towards the middle and it was a maximum of 300mm deep. It was orientated north-west to south-east and its sides were very shallow and irregular with an incline varying from 10º on the south-west side increasing to 40º elsewhere. The base was relatively flat, sloping slightly to the south-west. It was filled by a dark orangey brown clayey sandy-silt deposit (102) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and occasional small rounded stones. Four sherds of Neolithic pottery were recovered from this deposit as well as a reasonably large quantity of worked flint (70 pieces) including a number of bladelets.

Two possible stake-holes were recorded within the base of the feature towards its centre. Stake-hole [105] was sub-circular, measuring 140mm in diameter and 120mm deep. Its sides were steep and straight, with an incline of *c*.80º that tapered to a point. It was filled by a dark orangey brown clayey-silt deposit that contained abundant charcoal (*c*.10%) inclusions. Stake [107] was located 400mm to the south and measured 140mm x 90mm and 110mm deep. It was oval, its sides were almost vertical and the base was concave. It was filled by a mid-orangey brown sandy-silt deposit (108) that contained occasional charcoal flecks.

Plate 10: Cross-sections excavated through pit [101]

Pit/Posthole [90] *Figure 7*

Pit [90] was located 7m north-west of the large pit group and its position at the head of this group may suggest a spatial relationship. Its shape was oval and it measured 1.3m x 550mm and 130mm deep. Its sides and base were concave and it was filled by a mid-orangey brown clay-silt deposit (91) containing occasional small sub-rounded pebbles and a large cobble measuring 250x200x150mm.

Pit/Pothole [88] *Figure 7*

Pit [88] was located 12m south-west of the large pit group. It was oval in plan and measured 930mm x 520mm and 60mm deep. Its eastern side was steep with an incline of *c*.80º, gradually swallowing to *c*.50 º at the west side and it had a flat base. It was filled by a mid-orangey brown claye-silt deposit (89) that contained occasional charcoal flecks and small sub-rounded pebbles.

Modern Features *Figure 7*

A number of post-holes and a linear feature were recorded on the western side of the site. These features clearly cut the alluvial subsoil and relate to a field boundary that was recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map and was still in place prior to the re-development of the site.

Archaeological Watching Brief *Andy Hyam*

Routine inspections were conducted of foundation trenches in the north-eastern part of the site where previous archaeological potential had been identified. This was undertaken intermittently between October 2006 and June 2009. The individual plots that were inspected are shown on fig. 2.

Four blocks of flats were to be constructed during the first phase of building work and are numbered according to the architects plan for the site.

Flat Plots 90-104

Both blocks of flats followed the line of the police station original road and it was suspected that this may have protected any underlying archaeological deposits. By the time of the first visit Flats 90-95 and the eastern half of Flats 96-104 had already been excavated and concreted so nothing was available for inspection. The western half of block two was however available for inspection and it could be seen that the ground had already been truncated quite badly by earlier groundworks leaving approximately 0.5m of disturbed overburden above the natural substratum of orange brown sandy-clay with some gravel. It would appear that in this area the road construction was preceded by some work which disturbed the earlier topsoil and subsoil. No archaeological features were observed within the foundation trenches of these two blocks.

Flat Plots 105-110

Flats 105-110 were of a similar size to Flats 90-95 located to the north-east. The average trench depth of this block was around 0.6-0.7m deep with a variety of widths according to the requirements of the building. The ground at this point appeared to be rather less disturbed and consisted of a 0.1m layer of disturbed material over 0.3-.04m of mid-brown sandy clay-silt which was probably alluvial in origin. The natural substratum was the same as observed in the previous flat foundations. In the south-western corner of the foundations was a single linear feature in the form of a ditch or gulley. This ran in a north-west to south-east direction towards Leicester Road.

The ditch was a shallow feature cutting the subsoil and a few centimetres into the natural substratum. It had sides of approximately 45^{o} and was filled with a friable mid-brown sandy clay silt with occasional charcoal fragments although no finds were recovered from along its length (fig.14). Because of the amount of truncation it was not possible to see from how high this feature was cut although the fact that it cuts through the subsoil possibly indicates a reasonably late date. No further features were observed within this area.

Flat Plots 111-122

The foundations for flat Plots 111-122 were at the extreme south-western end of the block of flats and followed the line of the access road onto the site. Although the ground appeared to be slightly less disturbed in this area there was still no topsoil surviving. The foundations for this block were rather more substantial than before and cut deeply into the natural substratum to a depth of 1.6m in places. No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

The second stage of the watching brief, beginning in February 2007 covered the residential buildings being constructed to the south of the blocks of flats. They are listed in the chronological order in which they were excavated.

Foundations for Plots 66-69

The foundations for plots 66-69 were located to the east of the demolished police station covering the area where Trenches 1 and 8 were placed during the 2001 evaluation. Trench 1 had revealed a natural feature but nothing of archaeological interest. Trench 8 however had produced evidence of prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon activity indicating that more features would be revealed during the watching brief. However, despite the trench edges being clearly visible in section they both ran across portions of the new buildings where the foundations were at their narrowest. This exposed only a small amount of natural substratum and no archaeological features were visible at this point. Superimposing the results from Trench 8 over Foundations 66-69 also showed that the features previously observed would just miss the excavated foundations. No other archaeological features were observed during the excavation of this foundation.

Foundations for Plots 60-63

Foundations 60-63 were partially located across the eastern wing of the demolished Police station. Outside the boundaries of the Police station much of the area was covered in concrete that had been laid over a thin layer of tarmac or ash. This appeared to cover some extremely

disturbed and backfilled modern material with a number of disused services running across it. This disturbance required excavation of up to 1.8m in order to reach solid ground which effectively demonstrated the reason for the lack of any surviving archaeological features in this area.

Foundations for Plots 71, 70 and 72

These foundations were significantly smaller than the previous as these were the first detached houses to be built on the site. Plot 71 was located to the south west of Foundation 66-69 and to the north of evaluation trenches 3 and 5. During the life of the Police station this area appears to have been part of a service road which was evident from the deep layers of tarmac and hardcore across the area. A thick sandwich of tarmac, hardcore and tarmac extended down to a depth of 0.6m below current ground level in all the foundation trenches for this building. These layers sat directly on natural sandy clay with no apparent archaeological features cutting into it. Because of the degree of truncation it is difficult to assess the original level of the subsoil and natural substratum which may have had surviving archaeology until the road was constructed. No archaeological features were observed within this trench.

Slightly to the south of Plot 71 an earlier foundation had been excavated and filled with concrete (Plot 70). This was close to the location of Trench 5 which contained evidence for three ditches of possible Iron Age origin. Unfortunately as this had been excavated and filled there was no chance to investigate this area.

During July 2007 the foundations for plot 72 were also excavated.

Foundations for plots 47-53

These foundations were located within an area of heavily disturbed ground adjacent to the former Police Station.

Foundations for plots 44-46

These three houses were located next to the western boundary of the development site south of evaluation Trench 7. A brick lined service trench with a cast iron pipe ran north to south through the middle of plot 44 but no other features were observed. This area appeared to be quite disturbed, possibly due to the trees that stood here at the time of the Police Station, and approximately 0.6m of disturbed ground was removed in order to reach the natural sandy gravel and clay. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within these foundations.

Foundations for plots 78-81

Located to the south of the present ambulance station on a north-west to south-east alignment in an area formerly covered by evergreen trees. These trenches were excavated and concreted during w/c 16th of March 2008. It seems likely however that the tree roots would have caused extensive damage to this area.

Foundations for plots 74-77

Plots 74 to 77 were located to the west of Plots 78 to 81 behind the present council offices. Two houses occupied this area prior to redevelopment. The western side of the foundations and parts of the east to west trenches were observed until a water pipe was hit and the trenches became flooded and no more work could be carried out. As no archaeological features or deposits were seen it was decided to finish the watching brief at this stage.

Foundations for plots 24-26

Plots 24-26 were located at the southern edge of the site against the boundary with the railway in what were previously the back gardens of the earlier row of houses. The foundation trenches were excavated to a depth of approximately 1.6m to allow for anti-vibration pads to

be laid within the concrete. Areas of recent disturbance, as shown by grass, turf and plastic refuse, could be seen extending into the natural substratum in places. Much of the overlying topsoil and subsoil appeared to have been quite badly tracked and disturbed by recent activities in this area including storage of spoil and building materials. Despite this no features could be seen extending into the natural substratum and it was concluded that no archaeological features or deposits were present within this area.

Foundations for plot 28

This single building plot was located near to a former roadway on the old police station site giving a good chance of preserving any archaeological remains beneath it. The foundation trenches had been dug prior to this visit and the concrete had been poured (after consultation). Despite the concrete filling much of the trench it was clear that the area had been badly disturbed recently, probably during initial groundworks for this development. A slab of concrete was observed in the section of the north-western corner which may be associated with the earlier roadway. No archaeological features or deposits were present in these foundations.

Foundations for plots 22-23

Located to the east of plots 24-26 and adjacent to the boundary with the railway, this plot had the potential to contain some archaeology observed in the open area excavation carried out in 2008. Prior to excavation the area over, and around Plots 22-23 appeared to be quite disturbed and this was confirmed during and after the foundations had been dug. There was no visible distinction between topsoil and subsoil which had been completely disturbed by vehicle activity down to the natural substratum, Modern building materials could also be seen embedded into the upper levels of the surviving natural. Because of this disturbance it was not possible to observe any surviving archaeological features or deposits, if indeed any had been present.

Foundations for plot 21

A single plot located to the north of plots 22-23 near to the newly installed road and main drainage pipeline. Much of the south side of this plot had been badly disturbed with modern building materials and plastic extending at least 1m below current ground level and well below the natural substrate level. Elsewhere the foundation trenches appear to be relatively undisturbed and also devoid of any archaeological features or deposits. The adjacent plot number 20 was due to be excavated in the next few days but the ground was clearly disturbed in this area and the decision was made not to monitor this plot.

The Pottery and Miscellaneous Finds By Nicholas J. Cooper

Introduction and summary

A total of 107 sherds of Neolithic and 48 sherds of Mid-Late Iron Age and Transitional pottery were retrieved from the excavations. The low average sherds weight of 4g for both assemblages demonstrates the poor condition of the material which was both very fragmentary and heavily abraded. Consequently there is very little diagnostic information on vessel form or decoration and most inferences are made from fabric; with the Neolithic date of the material being confirmed by two radiocarbon dates.

Fabrics

The material has been analysed by form and fabric using the Leicestershire County Museums prehistoric pottery fabric series (Marsden 1998, 45), with reference to the Prehistoric Ceramic Research Groups Guidelines (PCRG 1992), and quantified by sherd count. The Neolithic

assemblage has been analysed with reference to the publication of a contemporary assemblage at Willington, Derbyshire (Marsden *et al*. 2009, 81) and unpublished material from Rothley Lodge Farm, Rothley, Leicestershire (Hunt 2006, 237). Two major Iron Age assemblages have been published in recent years from sites in the county at Wanlip and Humberstone (Marsden 1998 and 2000) and a report on an adjacent site in Beaumont Leys together with another from Humberstone is in press (Marsden 2010) from which the following summary fabric descriptions are drawn (with the addition of M2).

Q1 Quartz Sand
Common to abundant sub-rounded or rounded quartz sand (0.25-1mm) well to moderately sorted. Commonly used for Iron Age pottery.

Q4 Pebble Quartz with Quartz Sand
Common to abundant sub-rounded or rounded quartz sand (0.25-1mm) and occasional to sparse angular white pebble quartz (0.5-5mm). Used in the Neolithic particularly for impressed (Peterborough) wares but also occurs in the Iron Age but with smaller pebble quartz inclusions.

Q5 Pebble Quartz with little Quartz Sand
As Q4 but with little sand. Used in the Neolithic as above but also in the Iron Age as above.

R1/R2 igneous rock inclusions (granodiorite) sometimes with sand as Q1
Sparse to very abundant sub-angular igneous rock fragments, poorly-sorted, most up to 5mm.

S1/S2 Shell tempered
Moderate, to very common, poorly-sorted fossil marine shell up to 8mm without sand (S1) and with sand (S2) (as Q1). Typical of Iron Age fabrics in Eastern Leicestershire and Rutland but shall also used for Neolithic fabrics.

M2 Mudstone
Clean clay matrix with moderate, poorly-sorted amorphous fragments of red ferruginous mudstone up to 10mm. Single example of a Neolithic vessel.

The assemblage comes from seven separate contexts and is identified and quantified in the Table 1 below.

The Neolithic Pottery

Table 1: Neolithic Pottery

Context	Cut	Fabric	Form	Sherds	Weight	Dating
93	92	Q5	misc	1	2	Neolithic
94	92	Q5	misc	1	2	Neolithic
94	92	Q5	misc	1	3	Neolithic
94	92	S2	misc	2	4	Neolithic
95	92	Q5	misc	3	10	Neolithic
95	92	S1	misc	7	6	Neolithic
98	100	Q5	misc	23	120	Neolithic
98	100	M2	jar	28	192	Neolithic
98	100	Q5	misc	3	2	Neolithic
98	100	S1	misc	17	31	Neolithic
98	100	Q1	misc	11	37	Neolithic
99	100	Q1	misc	2	1	Neolithic
102	101	Q5	misc	3	3	Neolithic
102	101	S1	misc	1	1	Neolithic

128	127	Q5	misc	3	20	Neolithic
112	111	S1	misc	1	1	Neolithic
Total				**107**	**435**	**AvShWt 4.1g**

The Neolithic material derives predominantly from cut [100], context (98) which contained charcoal that has been radiocarbon dated to between 3790BC and 3640BC. That context group contains at least two vessels in fabric Q5 which, on the evidence from Rothley, would normally be used for impressed wares (Peterborough wares). However, none of the sherds is decorated and the typical bowl forms are not apparent. The best preserved vessel (23 sherds 120g) appears to be straight-sided with a diameter of 240mm and a body thickness of 7mm, and a sherd from the same vessel comes from (112). A second, thin-bodied vessel in Q1 (11 sherds, 37g), has a plain upright rim. The other well-preserved vessel (28 sherds, 192g) is in a ferruginous mudstone-tempered fabric, which appears to be a shouldered vessel with an upright, rolled over bead rim of 160mm diameter. The fabric and form are unparalleled but are perhaps similar to the plain early Neolithic vessels from Willington (Marsden *et al*. 2009, 99, fig.45.4-7). The group also contained a thin-bodied vessel in a shell-tempered fabric (S1).

A second radiocarbon date was obtained from charcoal contained within context (95) from cut [92] of between 3530BC and 3350BC. Ten sherds came from the context in fabrics Q5 and S1, with five others in Q5 from the other fills of the feature. No form or decoration was apparent.

The Mid-Late Iron Age and Transitional Roman pottery

The assemblage is recorded by fabric and quantified as in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Mid-Late Iron Age and Transitional pottery

Context	Cut	Fabric	Form	Sherds	Weight	Dating
25		S1	jar	4	33	M-LIA
25		Q1/SW	misc	3	11	Trans 1stCAD
34		Q1/G/SW	jar base	1	8	Trans 1stCAD
36	37	S/G	jar	6	22	Trans 1stCAD
36	37	S2	misc	1	2	Trans 1stCAD
36	37	SW	misc	1	2	Trans 1stCAD
36	37	Q1/5	misc	1	2	Trans 1stCAD
36	37	SW	misc	1	19	Trans 1stCAD
39		R2	misc	1	4	M-LIA
46	48	S1	jar base	7	23	M-LIA
46	48	R2	misc	2	6	M-LIA
46	48	GTBelgic	misc	1	1	Trans 1stCAD
47		R1	misc	2	9	M-LIA
47		Q5	misc	1	1	M-LIA
47		G	misc	1	1	M-LIA
52		S2	jar base	1	9	M-LIA
53	54	S1	misc	3	4	M-LIA
64		G	misc	1	1	M-LIA
77	78	Q4	misc	1	5	M-LIA
77	78	Q1	misc	4	6	M-LIA
77	78	S2	misc	1	1	M-LIA
83		S2	jar rim	1	4	M-LIA
85	87	Q4	misc	1	2	M-LIA
85	87	S1	misc	2	2	M-LIA
Total				**48**	**178**	**AvSdWt 3.7g**

The poor preservation of the material and the consequent shortage of diagnostic forms and decoration have not allowed for chronological precision, but the range of fabrics would tend to indicate that it belongs at the end of the Iron Age. On the one hand there are fabrics (S1/2, Q1, R2) which would be expected in jars belonging to the East Midlands Scored ware tradition, dating to the Mid-Late Iron Age (Elsdon 1992), but there is only one shell-tempered vessel, from evaluation context (25), with diagnostic scored decoration (in the north-eastern part of the county, it might be expected for the Scored ware to be shell-tempered, as in Rutland (Cooper 2000), but with occasional examples in quartz and rock-tempered fabrics as more usual in the sites to the north and west of Leicester, and this is supported by the recent assemblage from Burrough Hill). On the other hand there are also a range of fabrics incorporating a mixture of sand, shell and grog notably from (36) which would fit more comfortably into the range of sandy wares (SW) seen in the 1st century AD, and supported by a thin sherd in a fine grog-tempered fabric from (46) characteristic of 'Belgic' style vessels.

Metal Working Debris and Fired Clay

A total of 765g of metal working debris and fired clay was retrieved from the site, with only one fragment of fired clay coming from a Neolithic context. The material is quantified by context in the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Metal Working Debris and Fired Clay

Context	Cut	Description	Frags	Weight	Dating
39		Fired clay/daub	1	15	M-LIA
46	48	Fired clay/daub/perforated oven	7	64	M-LIA
46	48	Iron working hearth bottom	2	269	M-LIA
46	48	Vitrified clay/hearth lining	20	179	M-LIA
46	48	Vitrified clay/crucible fragments	2	11	M-LIA
47		Vitrified clay	8	2	M-LIA
50	49	Vitrified clay	2	3	M-LIA
53	55	Pb droplet waste	1	12	M-LIA
57	56	Vitrified clay/hearth lining	10	44	M-LIA
85	87	Iron working hearth bottom	3	103	M-LIA
86	87	Fired clay/daub/perforated oven	1	1	M-LIA
86	87	Fired clay/daub	10	59	M-LIA
98	100	Fired clay/daub	1	3	Neolithic
Total			**68**	**765**	

The bulk of the evidence for the working of iron in the form of a hearth bottom and vitrified hearth linings, together with two possible crucible fragments, came from (46), a context likely to date to the early or middle decades of the 1st century AD. A second hearth bottom with a high iron content also came from (85). Evidence of lead working in the form of droplet waste came from (53).

Amongst the fired clay fragments, which probably represent pieces of burnt daub from building structures, two, from (46) and (86), are perforated either by wattle or because they were part of perforated oven bases as seen at Empingham, Rutland (Cooper 2000, 71).

The Lithics Lynden Cooper

Some 254 worked lithics, all flint, were recovered from the excavation and are recorded in Table 4. The raw material was mostly local till-derived, yellowish brown semi-translucent flint. Two pieces were of an opaque grey flint. The majority of flint was recovered from four

contexts from a group of structurally related features that have Peterborough Ware association and contained charcoal radiocarbon dated to the boundary of the Early and Middle Neolithic. Flint from these four contexts are described here:

Context 94 (Pit 92) contained both blade and flake debitage and three core fragments, two of which could be refitted. The core fragments were remarkably fresh and sharp. Neither of the tools, a knife fragment and a serrated flake, was chronologically diagnostic, although both can be found in Middle Neolithic contexts.

Context 95 (Pit 92) contained predominantly flake technology debitage. The cores and shatter fragments were remarkably fresh and sharp. The scraper was not diagnostic to period.

Context 98 (Pit 100) was predominantly flake technology debitage but there was some blade and bladelet technology represented. Some of the flake debitage appeared fresh and sharp. The tools included a serrated blade, end-of-blade scraper and a piercer, while a microburin would attest to the production of a microlith. The material includes some Mesolithic material, bladelets, the end scraper and the microburin, but the majority would appear to be later prehistoric in date.

Context 102 (Pit 101) was predominantly flake technology debitage but there was some blade and bladelet technology represented which may indicate a small Mesolithic component. The remaining material is probably of a later prehistoric date.

While a small Mesolithic component is present the majority of the lithics in both the pit group and other features would appear to be later, exhibiting a flake technology using a hard hammer. The knapping quality is fairly proficient such that they are consistent with a Neolithic date.

Table 4: Worked Flint

Context	Type	Comment
unstrat	3ry flake	patinated
5	Serrated bladelet	
5	3ry flake	
5	piercer	
13	2ry flake	
25	Potlid, but possible scar	
29	3ry bladelet	sharp
29	Crested blade frag	
29	3ry flake	
34	knife	
34	3ry flake	
36	2ry blade	
36	4 x 2ry flake	
36	3ry flake	
36	shatter	
37	2 x 3ry flake	
39	12 x 2ry flake	
39	5 x 3ry flake	
39	2 x 1ry flake	
39	2 x chips	
39	2 x shatter	
39	1 x 2ry flake	burnt
39	Crested bladelet	
44	core	Opposed platform – ridiculously small!
44	3ry bladelet	patinated
46	2 x 2ry flake	
46	3ry flake	
46	Calcined shatter	
47	3ry flake	
60	3ry blade	
64	Serrated utilised blade frag	

72	Notched flake	
77	3ry flake	
94	2ry blade	
	2 x 3ry blade	
	1ry flake	
	2ry flake	
	2 x 3ry blade fragment	
	chip	
	3 x core frags	2 refit
	core (opposed platform)	sharp
	Knife fragment	
	Serrated flake	Grey flint
95	6 x cores	Very irregular. Nb sharp
	9 x shatter	sharp
	3ry blade	Grey flint
	18 x 2ry flake	
	10 x 3ry flake	
	1ry bladelet	
	3 x 2ry bladelet	
	scraper	
98	7 x cores (4 x single platform, 2 x orthogonal, 1 multi-platform)	
	5 x core frags	
	Burnt shatter	
	4 x shatter	
	35 x 2ry flakes	
	4 x 3ry flakes	
	2 x chips	
	2 x 2ry flakes	
	5 x 2ry bladelets	
	2 x 3ry blade	
	3ry bladelet	
	2 x 3ry bladelet frags	
	Serrated blade	
	End-of-blade scraper	
	microburin	
	piercer	
102	8 x shatter	1 burnt
	5 x 2ry flakes	
	1ry flake	
	24 x 2ry flakes	
	Crested flake	
	5 x cores (3 x multi-platform, keeled, on flake)	
	Core frag	
	Utilised? blade	
	13 x 3ry flake	4 x patinated
	4 x 2ry bladelets	
	2 x 3ry bladelets	
	5 x 2ry blades	
130	2ry flake	patinated
	2ry bladelet	

The Charred Plant Remains Angela Monckton

Introduction

Environmental samples were taken from features including pits and a possible hearth for the recovery of charred plant remains which may give evidence of diet, agriculture or activities on sites in the past. The features sampled were mainly Earlier Prehistoric pits which proved to be Neolithic, with a pit and hearth of the Middle-Late Iron Age, and two other pits of 1st century Iron Age-Roman Transition period dated from pottery types (see Cooper above).

This site was investigated for the presence of cereals and other remains to compare with results from other sites in the county and the region. Unfortunately very little was found in the samples but charcoal was recovered for radiocarbon dating.

Methods

Bulk samples were taken from datable features and 14 were processed to recover plant and animal remains.

Samples were wet sieved in a York tank using a 0.5mm mesh with flotation into a 0.3mm mesh sieve. The residues were air dried and then separated on a 4mm riddle and the fractions over 4mm, the coarse fractions, were sorted for all finds. The fractions below 4mm were examined for the presence of remains and reserved for sorting during the analysis stage if required. The flotation fractions (flots) were air dried and then packed carefully in self-seal polythene bags.

All the flots were examined and sorted using a low power stereo microscope and any plant remains were removed to glass specimen tubes. The plant remains were identified by comparison with modern reference material. Charred remains including charcoal was poorly represented in the samples, and the fine fraction residues (below 4mm) contained only occasional charcoal flecks, so further sorting was not necessary. The remains were noted with an estimate of quantity and tabulated below (Table 5).

Results

Only one of the 14 samples contained any charred plant remains other than charcoal and this was one of the Middle to Late Iron Age pits.

Earlier Prehistoric pits were sampled. Samples from three elongated shallow pits [92], [100] and [101] were processed but unfortunately did not produce any charred plant remains (Table 5). Most contained charcoal mainly as small flecks with larger fragments only from samples 8.1 [100], and from 9.1 and 14.1 from pit [92]. Charcoal from samples 8 and 9 were radiocarbon dated to the end of the Earlier Neolithic period (see above) which correlates well with the un-abraded flint that was recovered so it was assumed that this group of pits were all of this date. Two small samples 12 and 13 from [105] and [107] were floated carefully and sorted whilst wet to evaluate for any waterlogged or other material but nothing was found.

Of the Middle to Late Iron Age samples only sample 2 contained any charred plant remains at a low density of 0.86 items per litre of soil. Sample 2 was from a pit or post-hole [55], (53) contained four wheat chaff fragments (glume bases) of emmer or spelt (*Triticum dicoccum/spelta*), one was probably of spelt but all were broken very short and were abraded. The sample also contained a wheat grain of emmer or spelt and an indeterminate cereal grain. A sample from a possible hearth [87] contained nothing but occasional charcoal flecks.

IA-Roman transition sample 5 from pit [37] (36) of contained nothing but a few small charcoal fragments. Sample 3 from pit [49] (50) was also unproductive but contained some charcoal and vitrified clay.

Discussion and conclusions

The samples have no potential to produce sufficient remains for analysis or to provide much information about the site. The Neolithic pits produced no charred plant remains other than some charcoal fragments of elder from cut 100 with elder, hawthorn and ash from cut 92. Charcoal from each pit was radiocarbon dated to the end of the Early Neolithic period. Charred cereal grains, hazel nutshell and fruit stones or pips as food waste are abundant finds from Neolithic pits in the region although usually in small numbers, however, some pits have produced no such remains (Monckton 2006) as is the case here.

In the Iron Age samples a very low density of charred plant remains was found consisting of a few chaff fragments and a couple of cereal grains in only one sample, and a lack of charred plant remains in the other sample examined. Remains are often at a low density in Iron Age samples but a scatter of charred cereal grains, spelt wheat chaff and weed seeds is usually found as domestic waste from food preparation (Monckton 2004). The sample here produced remains at a low density of 0.86 items per litre of soil which compares with a range of sites from the county with low maximum densities of plant remains as evidence of small scale cereal cleaning for consumption. However, there are too few samples of this date to draw conclusions from this site. The presence of glume wheat probably including spelt would be as expected at Iron Age sites (Greig 1991). The samples of the IA-Roman Transitional date lack charred plant remains and it is possible that these features mainly represent non-domestic activity possibly some distance from occupation.

Table 5: Environmental Remains

Samp	Cont	Cut	Samp	Type	Gr	Cf	Se	Se	Chc	Comments.
NEO										
9.1	95	92	6	E-pit	-	-	-	-	+	A large charcoal frag of
10.1	94	92	5	E-pit	-	-	-	-	fl	Charcoal frags of eldr and ash.
10.2	94	92	5	E-pit	-	-	-	-	fl	-
14.1	95	92	6	E-pit	-	-	-	-	+	Some charcoal
14.2	94	92	7	E-pit	-	-	-	-	fl	-
8.1	98	100	5	E-pit	-	-	-	-	fl	Small flot, charcoal frags of
11.1	102	101	3	E-pit	-	-	-	-	fl	-
11.2	102	101	3	E-pit	-	-	-	-	fl	-
12	106	105	0.25	-	-	-	-	-	fl	Not waterlogged
13	108	107	0.25	-	-	-	-	-	fl	Not waterlogged
M-LIA										
2	53	55	7	Pit	2	4	-	-	+	Glume bases spelt or emmer, one
6.1	85	87	4	Hth	-	-	-	-	-	V. small flot.
IA-RB										
5.1	36	37	6	Pit	-	-	-	1	+	Roots and mod seed of Rumex
3.1	50	49	7.5	Pit	-	-	-	-	+	Some charcoal of ash and oak.

Key: Gr = cereal grain, Cf = chaff (glume bases), Se = seed, ch = charred, un = uncharred, Chc = charcoal, fl = flecks, frags = fragments, + = present, ++ = moderate amount, +++ = abundant.

E-pit = elongated pit, Hth = hearth. Modern root material in all except samples 2, 6, 9, 11 and 12.

Radiocarbon Dating

(taken from the results provided by *Göran Possnert/Ingela Sundström)*

Two fragments of carbonized wood recovered from environmental samples taken within pits (95) [92] and (98) [100] (from hawthorn and elder respectively) were submitted to The Angström Laboratory, Tandem Laboratory, Uppsala Universitet, Sweden, for accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) radiocarbon dating. The samples were prepared following standardised Acid/Alkali/Acid protocols. This involved adding 1% hydrochloric acid (HCl),

heating the mixture and kept just below boiling point for 8-10 hours. 1% Sodium hydroxide (NaOH) was then added and again the mixture was heated constantly just below boiling point for 8-10 hours. The insoluble fraction was then used to gain the most reliable age of the sample

The Tandem Laboratory, Uppsala Universitet maintains a programme of quality assurance procedures, in addition to participation in international inter-comparisons (Scott 2003). These tests indicate no laboratory offsets and demonstrate the validity of the measurement quoted.

The results are given in Table 6, and are quoted in accordance with the international standard known as the Trondheim convention (Stuiver and Kra 1986). They are conventional radiocarbon ages (Stuiver and Polach 1977). The calibrations of these results, which relate the radiocarbon measurements directly to the calendrical time scale, are given in fig. 15. All have been calculated using the datasets published by Reimer *et al* (2004) and the computer program OxCal (v3.10) (Bronk Ramsey 1995; 1998; 2001). They are quoted in the form recommended by Mook (1986), with the end points rounded outward to 10 years.

The taphonomic relationship between a sample and its context is the most hazardous link in this process, since the mechanisms by which a sample came to be in its context are a matter of interpretative decision rather than certain knowledge. The pottery fragments recovered during the excavation did not contain any clear residues suitable for radiocarbon dating. Only a very small quantity of charcoal was recovered from the sieved deposits and only two fragments of charcoal were deemed suitable for radiocarbon dating. These were recovered from upper fills of two of the large pits (95) and (98) which means any interpretations made from the calculated dates do have to be questioned on the basis of their potential residualality.

Table 6: Radiocarbon Results

Lab number	Sample	$\delta^{13}C$ VPDB	^{13}C age BP
Ua-40193	X.A32.2006 #8 (98)	-26,7	4930 ± 38
Ua-40194	X.A32.2006 #9 (95)	-26,0	4648 ± 38

Analysis and Discussion

The results of the excavation have appeared to produce two distinctly separate phases of archaeological activity within the two phases of excavation and this in part matches the results interpreted from the evaluation. The first phase of excavation was undertaken in order to target features of possible Early Saxon date however the excavations recorded activity dating to the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period. It is feasible that the features recorded during the evaluation may have actually related to this period. The second phase of excavation was undertaken in order to target Neolithic activity suggested in the evaluation and the results appear to have confirmed this activity.

Earlier Neolithic Activity

The interpretation of the large pits recorded during the excavation is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly it is not known whether the features recorded represent the complete group of activity on the site or whether they are part of a larger complex of features extending outside the study area. Also it appears likely that the remains have suffered some degree of horizontal truncation as well as later intrusions that could either relate to later phases associated with the feature or represent totally separate activities. The dating of the features also remains problematic as neither the pottery or flint recovered was clearly diagnostic. Also the radiocarbon dates obtained from fragments of charcoal contain an uncertain degree of

residuality as no discrete deposits of charcoal were recovered. However given the reasonably close dating between two independently sampled features to the middle of the third millennium BC, the reasonably large quantity of un-abraded flint, including the presence of two core fragments that fitted back together it would suggest that the features are likely to date to the latter part of the Early Neolithic (*c.*4000-3500BC) or beginning of the Middle Neolithic (*c*.3500-2500BC).

Excavation of different sites has shown that pit digging becomes increasingly commonplace in the Neolithic, reaching a climax in the Later Neolithic (Thomas 1999). Pits can be either located near monuments or in areas apparently devoid of any other Neolithic activity. Interpretations vary but often stress the ritual aspects of pit excavation and artefact deposition. It is obviously important to try and ascertain on the basis of the evidence whether the excavated remains relate to ceremonial or settlement activities.

Evidence of Earlier Neolithic settlement activity is occasional in Leicestershire as is evidence for the Earlier Neolithic throughout the East Midlands and Britain as a whole. The clearest evidence for Neolithic settlement in the East Midlands comes from Lismore Fields, Buxton, Derbyshire where sub-rectangular buildings in the form of postholes with preserved floors have been recorded. A series of five radiocarbon dates were obtained from the site dating between 3990-3105 cal. BC (Garton 1991). Substantial evidence of Earlier Neolithic activity has been recorded at Willington, Derbyshire that had been well preserved beneath thick alluvium, probably dating to the Early Bronze Age. Occupation remains including pits, post-holes and surface spreads were recorded in association with fallen trees. Analysis of one pit has revealed clear evidence of burying of soil from surface spreads containing both recently deposited and residual material. The idea of burying selected cultural elements in pits specifically dug for the purpose has become an established part of understanding of Neolithic and later prehistoric behaviour in recent years (Thomas 1999, 64–74). The structural remains for the site were scant and difficult to interpret with any confidence, although short arcs of post-holes were recorded. There was evidence of food preparation in the cooking-pit, hearth and oven-type features recorded. However it is suggested from the flint and environmental remains that the activity relates to episodes of short seasonal occupation of mostly wooded areas, possibly related to specific tasks in the yearly round, repeated over several centuries rather than continued settlement occupation. In Leicestershire very little settlement evidence in the form of archaeological features attributable to the Earlier Neolithic have been recorded and appears to be restricted to discreet, apparently isolated pits. A notable example was recorded during excavations along the Rearsby Bypass (Clarke 2007), located approximately 9km to the south-west where Neolithic pottery was also found in pit, which produced two radio-carbon dates, calibrated to *c*. 3530BC-3350 BC and *c*. 3410BC- 3310BC (2007: 45). The pit was recorded in the vicinity of further pits but these were undated. Later Neolithic and Bronze Age features were also recorded on the site containing Earlier Neolithic Peterboroughware pottery. The area where this activity was recorded had initially been identified through field walking which had located a dense scatter of flint tools suggesting occupation during the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, this density was still apparent within the field during the excavation. It therefore seems likely that the features revealed after topsoil stripping represent only a fraction of the archaeological activity of the area, with much of the evidence having been lost through horizontal truncation caused by land erosion and/or agricultural practice.

This scant nature of settlement evidence continues into the Later Neolithic in Leicestershire but examples are more widespread, usually consisting of pits containing Grooved Ware that are known from Syston (Meek 1997), Eye Kettleby (Finn 2004), and Castle Donington in Leicestershire (Coward 2003). At Rothley a large assemblage of Grooved Ware has recently been located at a possible Late Neolithic settlement site incorporating pits and a possible sunken featured building. The possible building feature was a large amorphous, flat-based pit, *c*.5m diameter. The fill of this pit produced several thousand finds including decorated pottery sherds, a large lithic assemblage including an ‘undressed’ axe head and a remarkable

engraved stone plaque displaying figurative art (Clay, Hunt and Cooper 2006). This site had excellent preservation including evidence of original Neolithic land surfaces that had been sealed by deep colluvial layers close to the base of a steep hill that had protected the site from any horizontal truncation.

The arrangement Earlier Neolithic pits recorded at Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray shows no clear correlation with any of the broadly contemporaneous settlement sites mentioned previously. The features do exhibit similarities with some of the features recorded from of these sites but clear differences remain. The single large, shallow and relatively flat based pits recorded Eye Kettleby (pit **3252**) and Rothley (pit **148**) do form some resemblance with the ones excavated (fig.16). They are both large and elongated with indications of structural elements and with fills containing large quantities of worked lithic material and pottery. Pit [100] (the feature at the opposing end to pit/post-hole [90]) contained evidence of a line of post-holes that ran diagonally across the feature although the majority of these features were ephemeral apart from the deeper feature located on the northern edge of the feature. Pit [92] had evidence of a stake-hole on its north-west side with further more ephemeral stake-hole/post-hole features around its north-east and south-east edges. Pit [100] also revealed evidence of two stake-holes within its base.

Unlike the pits at Eye Kettleby and Rothley the evidence from the pits recorded at Melton Mowbray suggests the pits represent a clear spatial arrangement with each other rather than stand alone features. Pits [92] and [101] were similar in length and ran broadly parallel with a *c.* 9m separation between them which is partially closed at the south-east and by the notably shorter pit [100]. Similar radiocarbon dates were obtained for the upper fills of pits [92] and [100] (dating between 3790-3350 cal. BC) although the two dates do not actually overlap. The latest the charcoal from [100] (98) could date to is 3640 cal BC and the earliest the charcoal from [92] (95) could date to is 3620 cal BC (95% confidence) but is possible the dates between the samples many vary by over four hundred years. Given the context from which the charcoal was obtained from it is only reasonable to use these dates to suggest broadly when the features are likely to date to rather than place any further suggestion on whether the separate dates could indicate anything further, such as separate phases of activity or feature revisiting/re-modelling for example. Further evidence that the features actually formed a coherent group was indicated by location a pit/post-hole [90] recorded equidistantly between pits [92] and [101], approximately 6m from their north-west ends. A large cobble was located within the feature that may suggest packing for a post. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature, but the lack of any other discrete pitting recorded elsewhere beyond the immediate vicinity of the large pits (apart from one small pit recorded to the southwest of the group) may suggest that the feature is contemporary. The spatial arrangement of the recorded post-holes within the individual pits does not give a clear indication of functionality but when these features are considered as a group and some significance should be drawn from the greater structural evidence suggested within pit [100] which forms the closed end of the feature arrangement.

The irregularity of the sides of the pits and poor definition of the features within the natural substratum are reminiscent characteristics of tree-fall features recorded at Willington that did contain Neolithic pottery and flint, indeed pit [92] had originally been interpreted as a hollow during the evaluation. It is debated whether these types of natural features could have been utilized features rather than their appearance in the archaeological record as fortuitous infill's of residual material. However from the evidence it would appear unlikely that the pits are natural, although it is not totally inconceivable that three independent natural features could form a linear and perpendicular arrangement with one another and that they become in-filled with contemporary residual material. Similarly to the features recorded at Willington, there was evidence of later intrusions in the top of the two deeper (better preserved pits) pits. Unfortunately only one of these features was systematically excavated and did not provide any dating material to suggest whether the features were broad contemporary or if they relate

to a totally different phase of activity, such as the Late Iron Age/Early Roman activity recorded in the vicinity.

Earlier Neolithic ceremonial and burial practices are more widely recorded in the East Midlands than the settlement evidence although only one definite monument has so far been recorded within Leicestershire, consisting of a causewayed enclosure located at Husbands Bosworth, on the Northamptonshire border. This monument consists of a closely-grouped concentric circuit consisting of a double ring of interrupted ditches enclosing an ovoid area covering *c*. 1.5 ha. It was located during gradiometer survey as a part of a quarry extension proposal and was subsequently evaluated, producing Late Neolithic pottery and large quantities of flint (Butler and Thomas 1999; Thomas 1999; Beamish forthcoming). This monument is one of nine known causewayed enclosures in the East Midlands. Other types of Early Neolithic non-megalithic ditched monuments recorded within the East Midlands include long barrows, long enclosures and henges. Long enclosures have usually been recorded through aerial photography and many of which are likely to be evidence of ploughed-out long barrows (Jones 1998: 102). Long barrows vary in form considerably but Kinnes's (1992) study into these features has identified three basic types based on ground plan. The most abundant ditch plans are a flanking pair, parallel or splayed, straight or slightly curved (Type A, Kinnes 1992: 65). The other types are the "U" format (Type B) and Full Enclosure (Type C). The length of these monuments also varies considerably, Kinnes's study showed extreme lengths of mound in the monument class between 14 and 125m. No extant long barrows have been recorded in Leicestershire and Rutland although cropmarks showing elongated enclosures from Misterton, Ketton and Harston may indicate evidence of ploughed-out long barrows (Clay 2006, 75; Loveday 1990, 86).

There appears to be clear resemblance between the pit group plan and styles of long barrows recorded further afield within the British Neolithic. It is possible to interpret the parallel pits as flanking ditches and that the perpendicular pit could represent evidence of a post-lined façade, indicating a south-east entrance into monument although the gaps between the features is narrow. This would fit well with the most abundant 'Type A' barrow classification. The length of the monument (from the front of the façade to the north-west end the pits/ditches) would equate to *c*.15 m and a width of *c*.9m between the flanking ditches. It is possible the monument could be up to 20m in length if the pit/post-hole feature was also a part of the monument. Similar arrangements of ditches/pits have been recorded as long barrows such as at North Marden, Sussex and Kingston Deverill, Wiltshire for example. (Kinnes 1992: 182; fig.17). At North Marden flanking ditches and curvi-linear pits containing Peterboroughware pottery and human cranial fragments enclosed a central area although no internal structural evidence survived. At Kingston Deverill ditches excavated as ovate pit were recorded that partially enclosed a hexagonal group of postholes. The interpreted south-east orientation of the feature group provides further evidence that could support a barrow theory. Kinnes's study suggests that an overwhelming proportion of long barrows are orientated between north-east and south-east (77%) and it has been argued that the emphasis on alignment relates to solar and lunar cycles (1992, 68-9).

Although the evidence does support 'short' long barrow theory for the arrangement of the features, the interpretation does have to remain only speculative on the basis of a lack of any other comparative explanations and the evidence is certainly problematic. The group of features do fall within the size dimensions for this type of monument but it is small and certainly positioned at the extreme end of the scale. Also there was no evidence of a mound or any other type of structure recorded within the internal area of the features and nothing from the scant remains recovered from the feature in-fills gave any indication the features relate to a ritual monument. The sides of the flanking features are very shallow for this type of monument where a steep sided flat profile might be expected. However it is reasonable to suggest that the features do not necessarily need to be very deep if turf had been used to construct a mound and the flanking features were only excavated in order to demark the monument entrance. Also it is likely the features have suffered from horizontal truncation.

The thick layer of alluvium recorded above the features had preserved them from recent truncation but it has been suggested that the alluviation represents a medieval phenomenon. The alluviation is thought to have been caused by increased flooding as a result of climatic downturn around the 14th century, with flood waters containing a high silt load, derived from intensive ploughing (Brown *et al.* 2001; Finn 2001, 15). It is certainly clear from the recorded archaeology that the alluviation must post-date the Early Roman period which does suggest the features have been subject to unknown levels of erosion over a long period of time. The lack of any evidence of a mound structure recorded below the alluvium does remain problematic although given the poor definition of the natural substratum below the alluvium it is feasible that any observations of differences in soil types during excavation of the overlying subsoil could have been missed.

In conclusion it has only been possible to suggest tentative interpretations for the group of Early Neolithic features excavated at Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray rather than ascertain the true nature of the features. The features certainly seem to be evidence of a small grouped enclosure rather than representing individual pits or structures. Although no comparative evidence of domestic settlement of this nature has been recorded within the East Midlands is possible the features could represent settlement evidence of uncertain function. However the spatial arrangement of the feature is more indicative of a mortuary feature from comparative sites, but the lack of finds indicative of ritual activity does make this interpretation speculative.

Late Iron Age/Roman Activity

In contrast to the Neolithic activity recorded at the eastern end of the excavation area, the archaeology towards the western end would appear to be somewhat later. A complex group of intercutting pits was recorded close to the southern site boundary. The pottery recovered from the pits suggests the activity dates to the Late Iron Age or transitional Roman period (1st century AD) and may suggest either different phases of activity or a continual re-use of the site. The function of these pits is uncertain although it seems unlikely they just represent rubbish pits given the small quantities of material contained within them. The concentrated but apparently disorganised nature of the pitting could indicate that they represent small scale clay extraction and it is possible that this in turn may relate to the evidence of metalworking recorded on the site. One of the pits contained reasonable quantities of hearth bottom and vitrified hearth lining fragments, together with two possible crucible fragments. A number of the other features also contained smaller quantities of vitrified clay which indicates ironworking was occurring nearby although no hammer scale was found in the recovered samples. It is feasible therefore that clay extracted from these pits could have been used in the construction of hearths/furnaces associated with the metal working. Evidence of small scale metalworking is often recorded as a specific element within a wider settlement pattern such as at Birstall, Leicestershire (Speed 2009, 36) where a small enclosure (Enclosure IIB) had been constructed within the corner of a larger settlement enclosure (Enclosure II) and had been used as a metal working activity area, as evidenced from the numerous metal objects, slag and weathered iron working residues recorded from the enclosure ditch backfill. It is likely that the metal working recorded at Melton Mowbray is also part of a larger settlement pattern although interpretation is again limited by the extent of the area investigated. The pits were located immediately adjacent to a shallow undated gully that was orientated north-west to south-east. It is likely the gully relates to a similar shallow linear feature that that was orientated on a perpendicular alignment located in Trenches 2, 4 and 9 (2001). The apparent turn in the feature within Trench 9 (2001) would suggest that they form part of an enclosure with the gully recorded within the excavation area. A single small sherd of quartz tempered pottery (*c.2* grams) was recorded from the wide linear feature in Trench 2 (2001) that was originally suggested to be Saxon although it seems feasible the pottery could actually be earlier given the similar quartz tempered fabrics recorded within the pits. Trench 9 (2001) also recorded a number of undated discrete posthole features within the internal area created by the linear features although no further postholes were recorded during the excavation. Two

shallow pit/post-hole features were recorded outside the enclosed space. These features were also undated although the larger pit did produce two flint flakes.

Further Late Iron Age/Early Roman activity was recorded in the northern part of the site during the evaluation phases (adjacent to the ambulance station) including a possible large enclosure corner and roundhouse gully. It was hoped that further evidence of this activity and its extent would be recorded during the watching brief for the site that involved observation of foundation trenches. Unfortunately very little archaeological evidence was recorded during this phase of work. Plots 66-69 were located within the area of dense activity recorded around Trench 8 (2001) and Trench 9 (2006) but it is suggested that the foundations would have just missed the features previously recorded. It is also likely that identification of any archaeological deposits within the foundation trenches would have proved difficult given the poor definition the features generally had within the dark brown clay natural. A single undated ditch feature was recorded within the foundation for Flat Plots 66-69 on the Leicester Road frontage although it is not possible to relate this feature to any archaeology previously recorded and it is suggested the feature could be considerably later in date given that it appeared to truncate the subsoil which is likely to date to the medieval period. Although there is no stratigraphic link between the Late Iron Age/Early Roman recorded within the excavation area and the activity recorded to the north of the site, the broadly contemporary dating recovered from the features could suggest they relate to the same phase of settlement activity on the site.

In conclusion, it seems likely that the Late Iron Age/Early Roman activity recorded on the site during the excavation represents only a specific element of activity within a wider pattern of domestic farmstead settlement activity.

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Archive

A summary of the work will appear in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, volume* **84** (forthcoming). A more detailed article may also be submitted for publication in due course.

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services, under the accession X.A.32.2006.

The content of the archive consists of:

1 A4 unbound copy of this report

4 A4 Context summary sheets

150 A5 Context sheets

3 A4 Drawing records

1 A4 Sample record

6 A4 photo records

1 CD containing 299 digital photos

4 Films of black and white contact prints and negatives

1 Box of finds

	OASIS entry summary for universi1-87520
Project Name	Leicester Road, Melton
Summary	The excavation was focussed within the southern part of the site and revealed evidence of Early Neolithic activity dating between 3790-3350 cal. BC consisting of three elongated pits forming a small grouped enclosure/structure. Although the true function of these features has not been ascertained the spatial arrangement of the features is reminiscent of other recorded small mortuary long barrows but the lack of finds indicative of ritual activity does make this interpretation speculative. Later activity attributed to the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period was also recorded in the form of intercutting pits with associated metalwork debris and it is suggested these remains represent only a specific element of activity within a wider pattern of domestic farmstead settlement activity on the site. The watching brief only produced limited evidence of any archaeological activity elsewhere on the site despite the potential highlighted by previous evaluation.
Project Type	Excavation and Watching Brief
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	James Harvey
Previous/Future work	Previous: desk-based assessment and evaluation. No future work.
Current Land Use (2006)	Former police station, cottages and paddock fields
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	PPG16
Position in the Planning Process	as a condition
Site Co ordinates	SK 7474 1870 (centered on)
Start/end dates of field work	October 2006 to April 2005
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services
Study Area	4.39ha development, 0.21ha open area excavation
Associated project reference codes	Museum accession ID: XA.32.2006 OASIS form ID: universi1-87520

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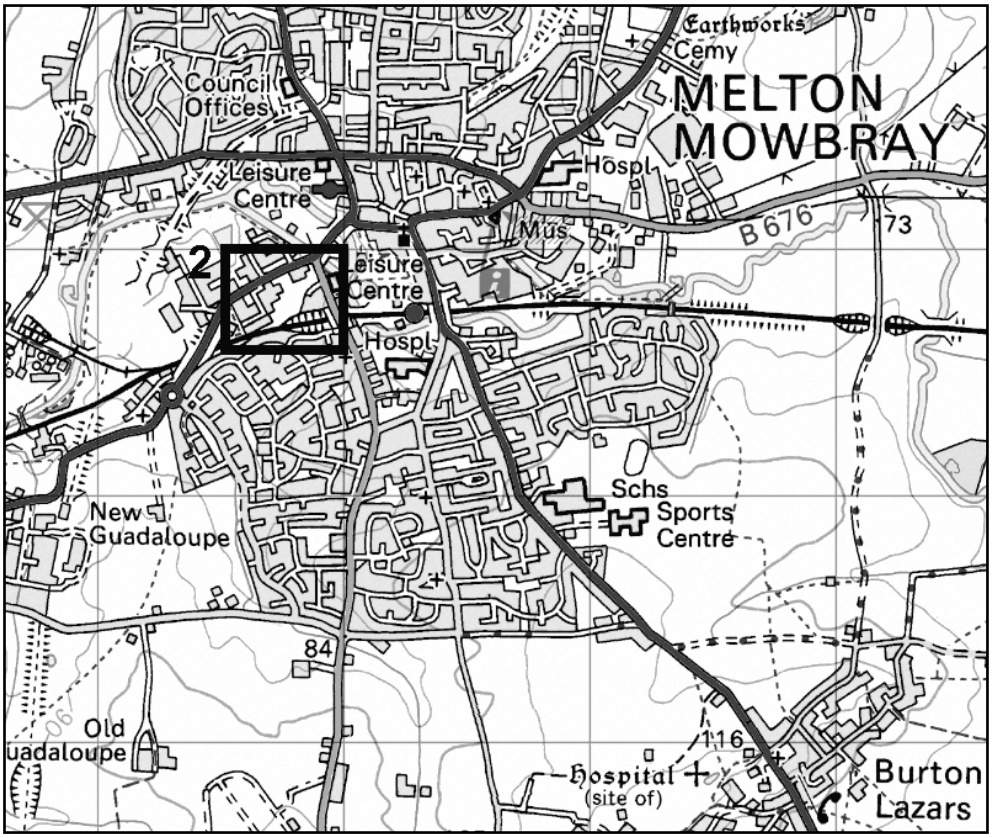

Figure 1 Site location

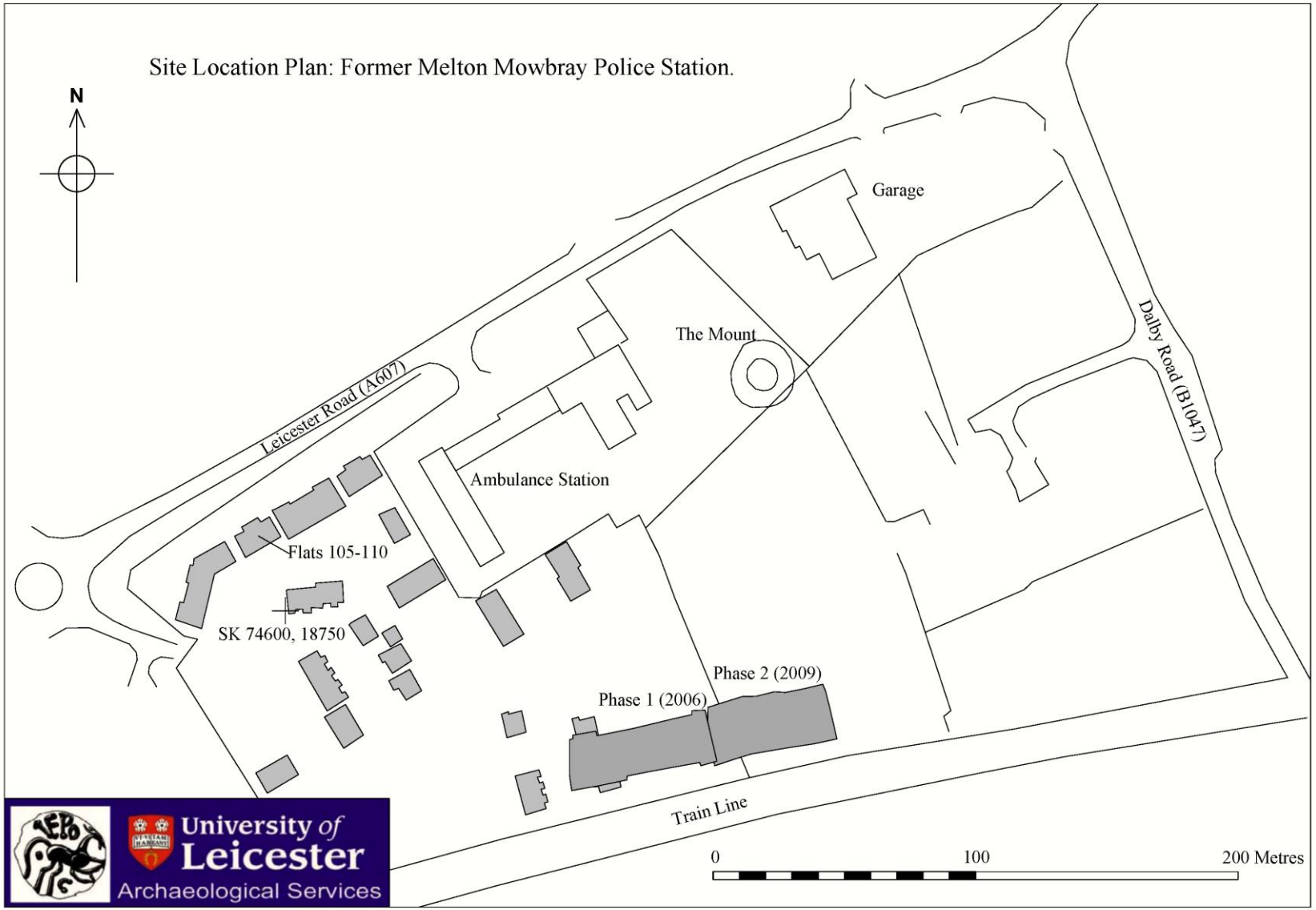

Figure 2: Plan showing areas of investigation

(dark grey denotes the open excavation area, light grey denotes the areas covered in the watching brief)

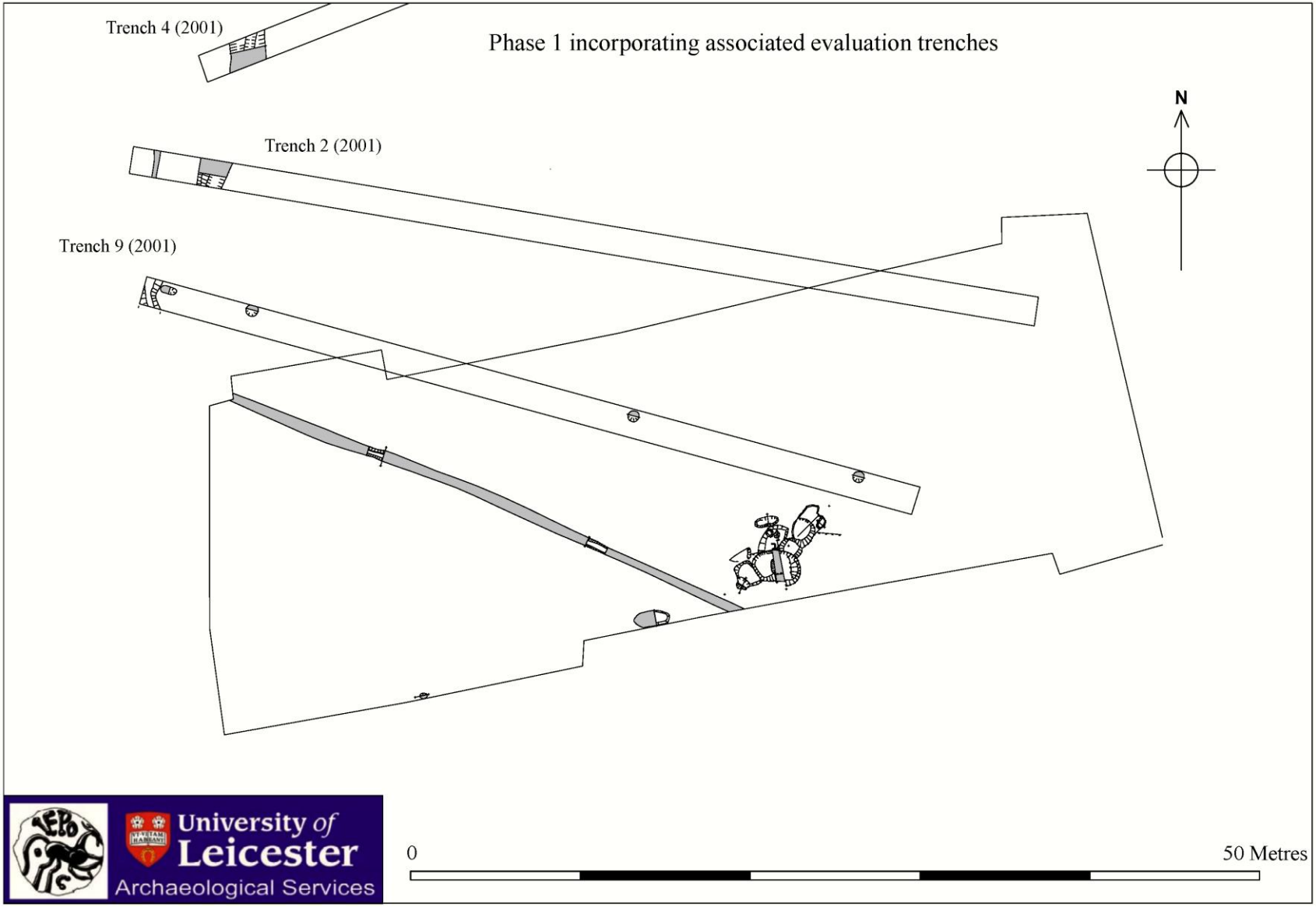

Figure 3: Plan of archaeological features recorded within Phase 1 incorporating the earlier evaluation trenches (Finn. 2001)

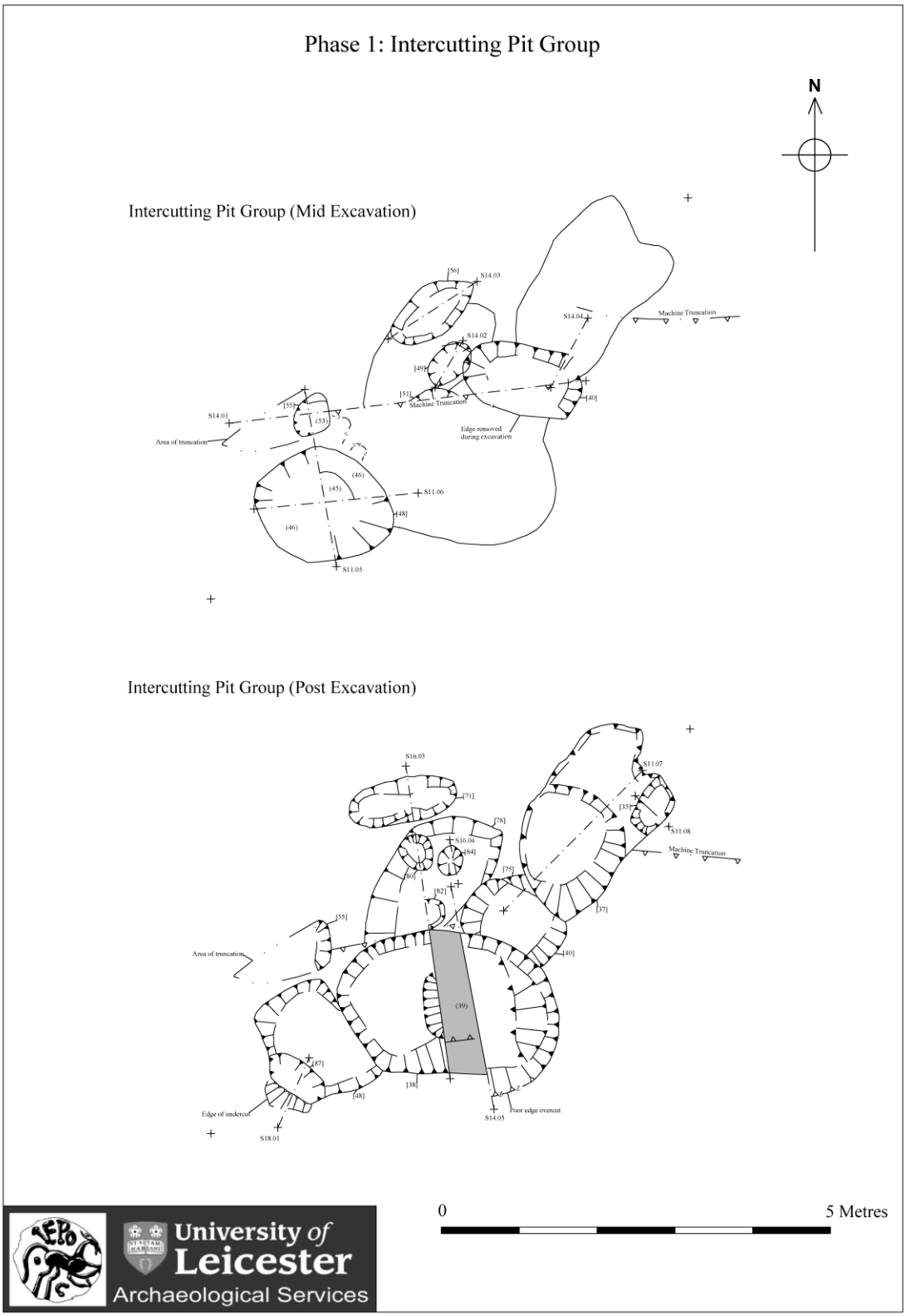

Figure 4: Plan of intercutting pits recorded in Phase 1

(mid-excavation plan above, post-excavation plan below)

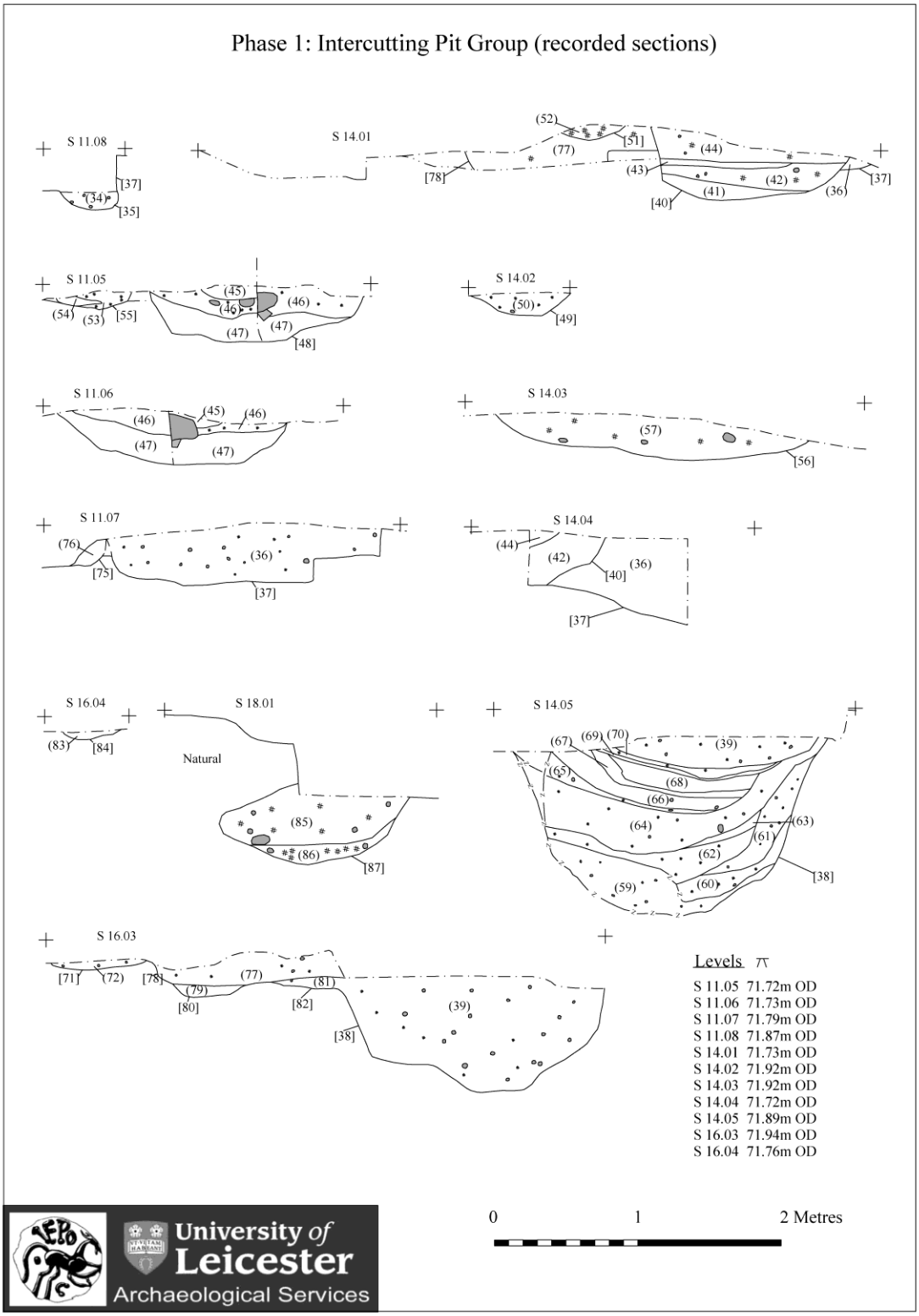

Figure 5: Recorded sections associated with the intercutting pits recorded in Phase 1

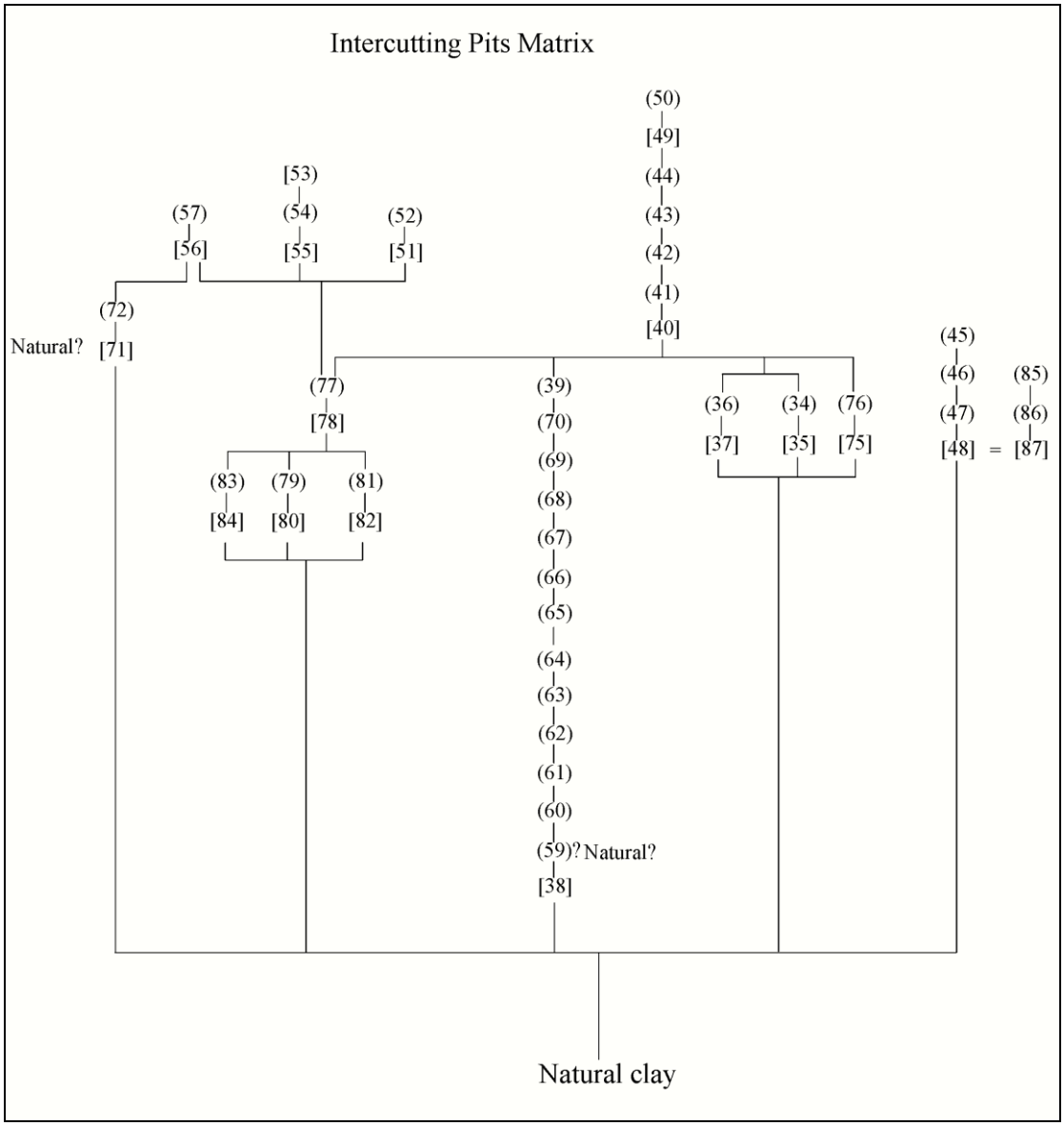

Figure 6: Stratigraphic matrix for the intercutting pit group recorded in Phase 1

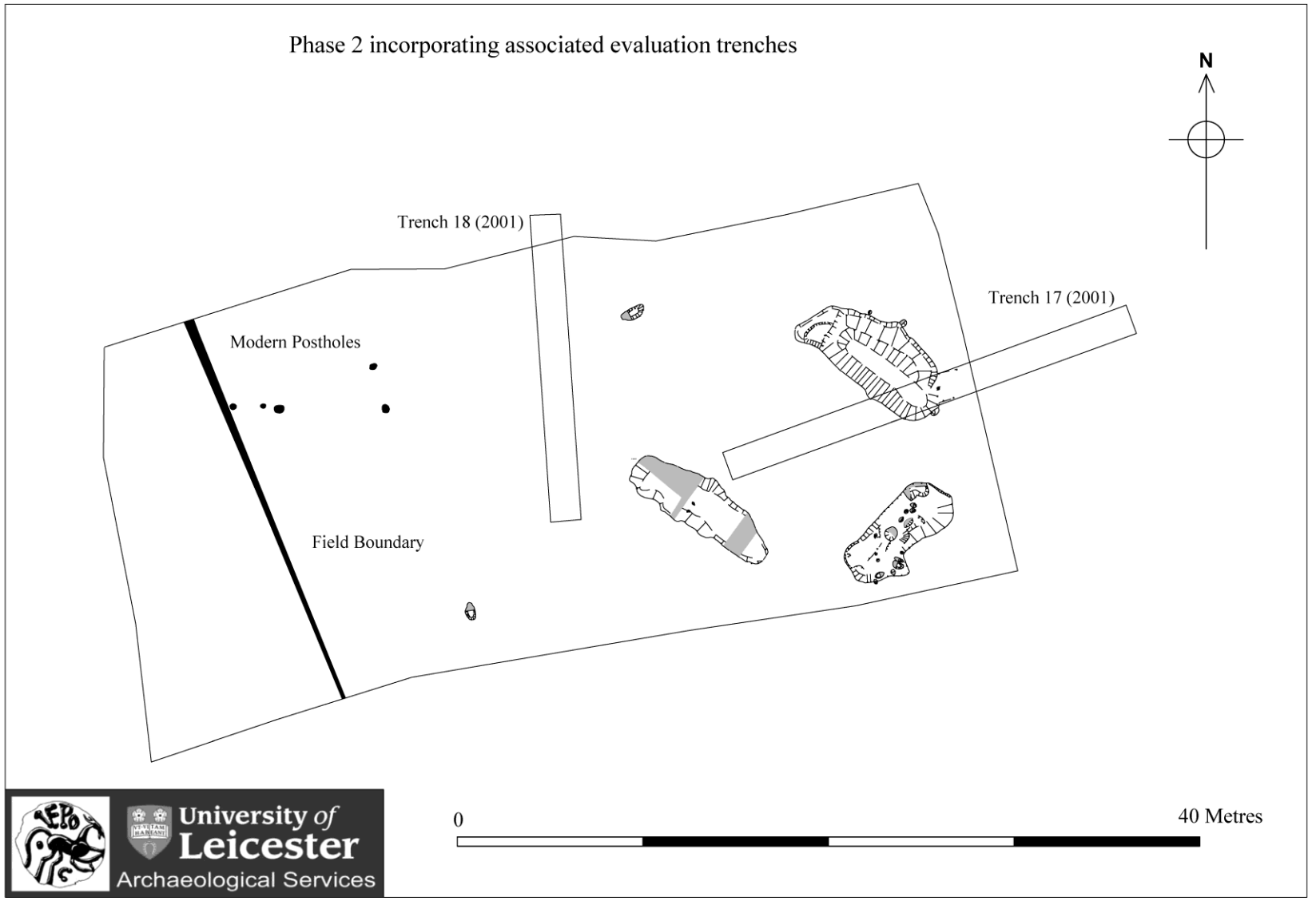

Figure 7: Plan of archaeological features recorded within Phase 2 incorporating the earlier evaluation trenches (Finn. 2001)

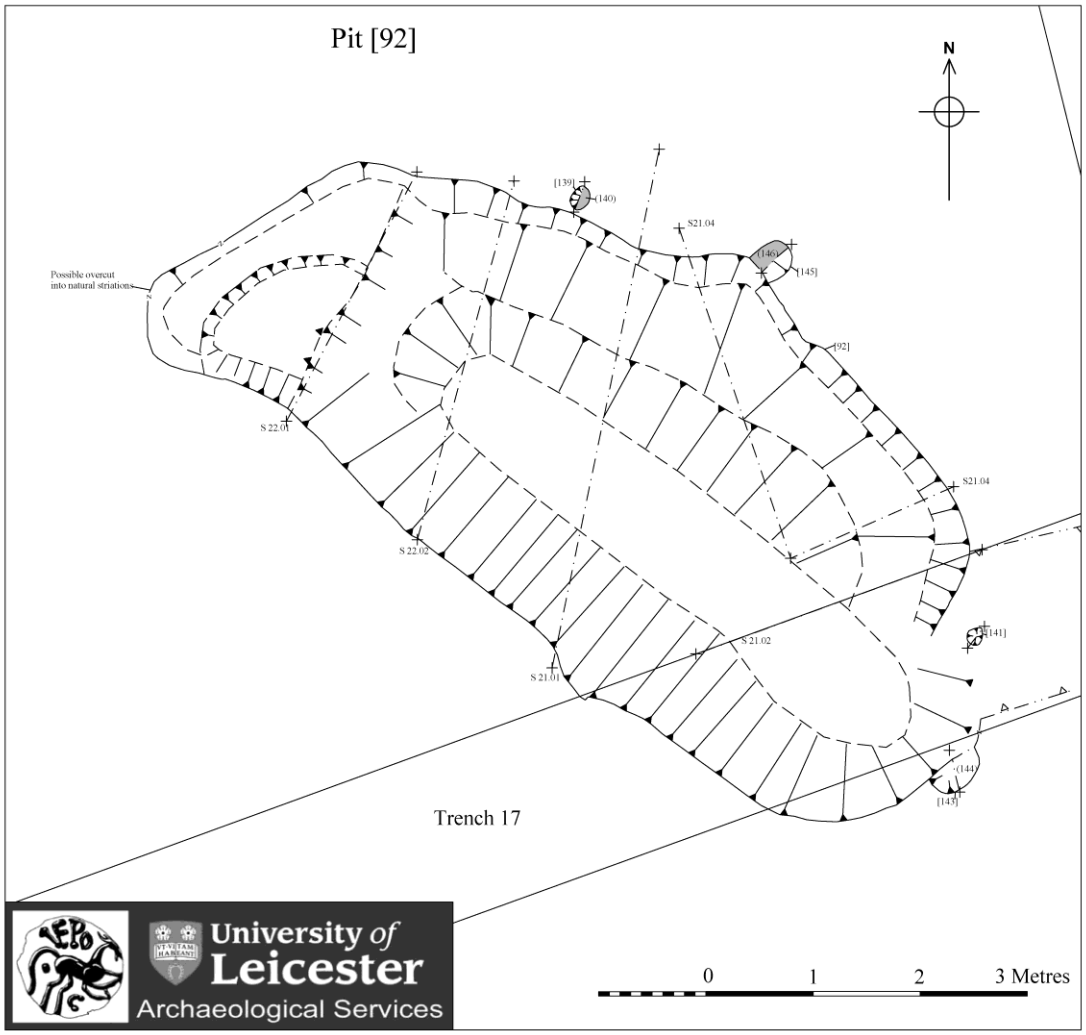

Figure 8: Post-Excavation plan of Pit [92]

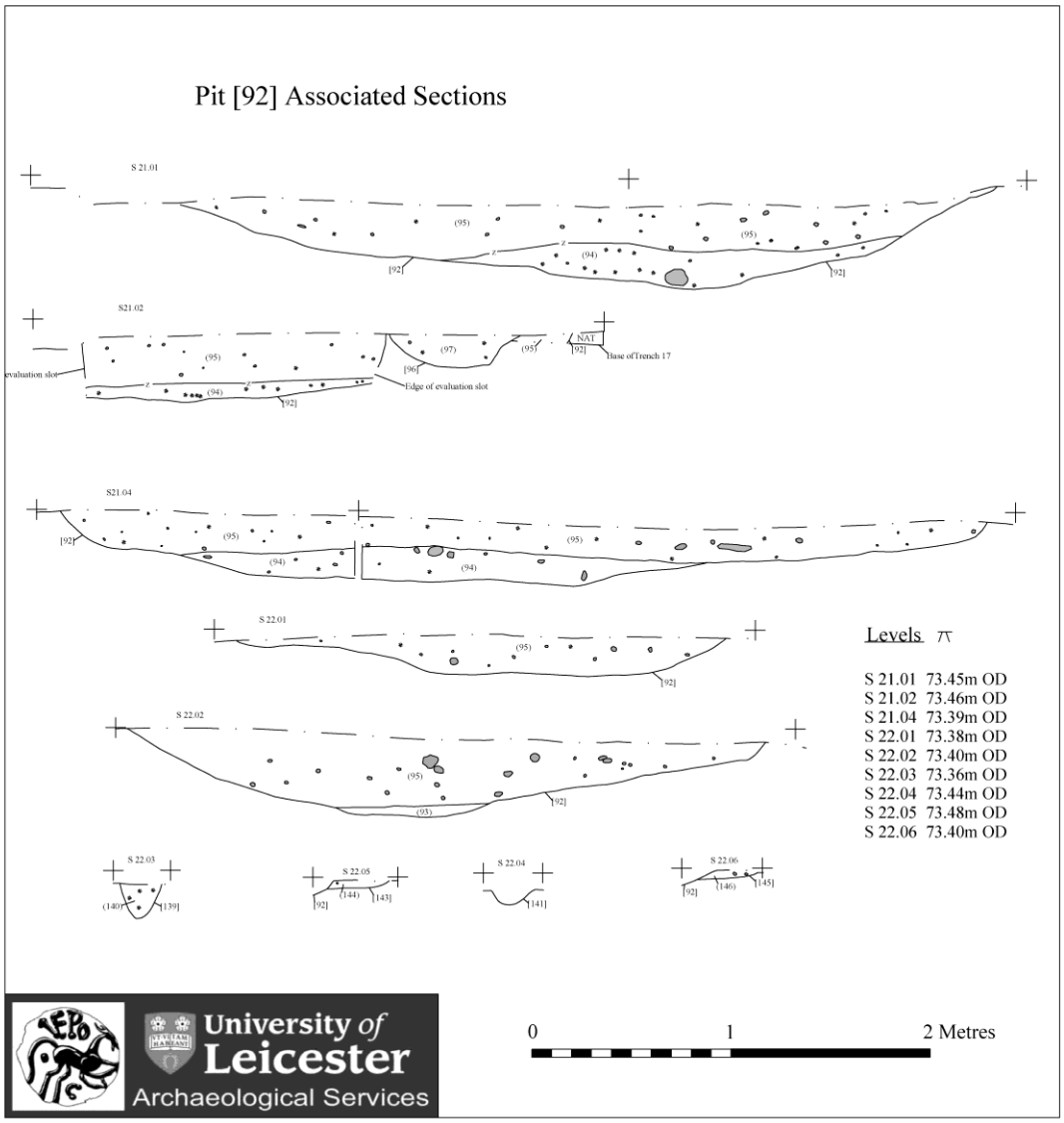

Figure 9: Recorded sections associated with Pit [92]

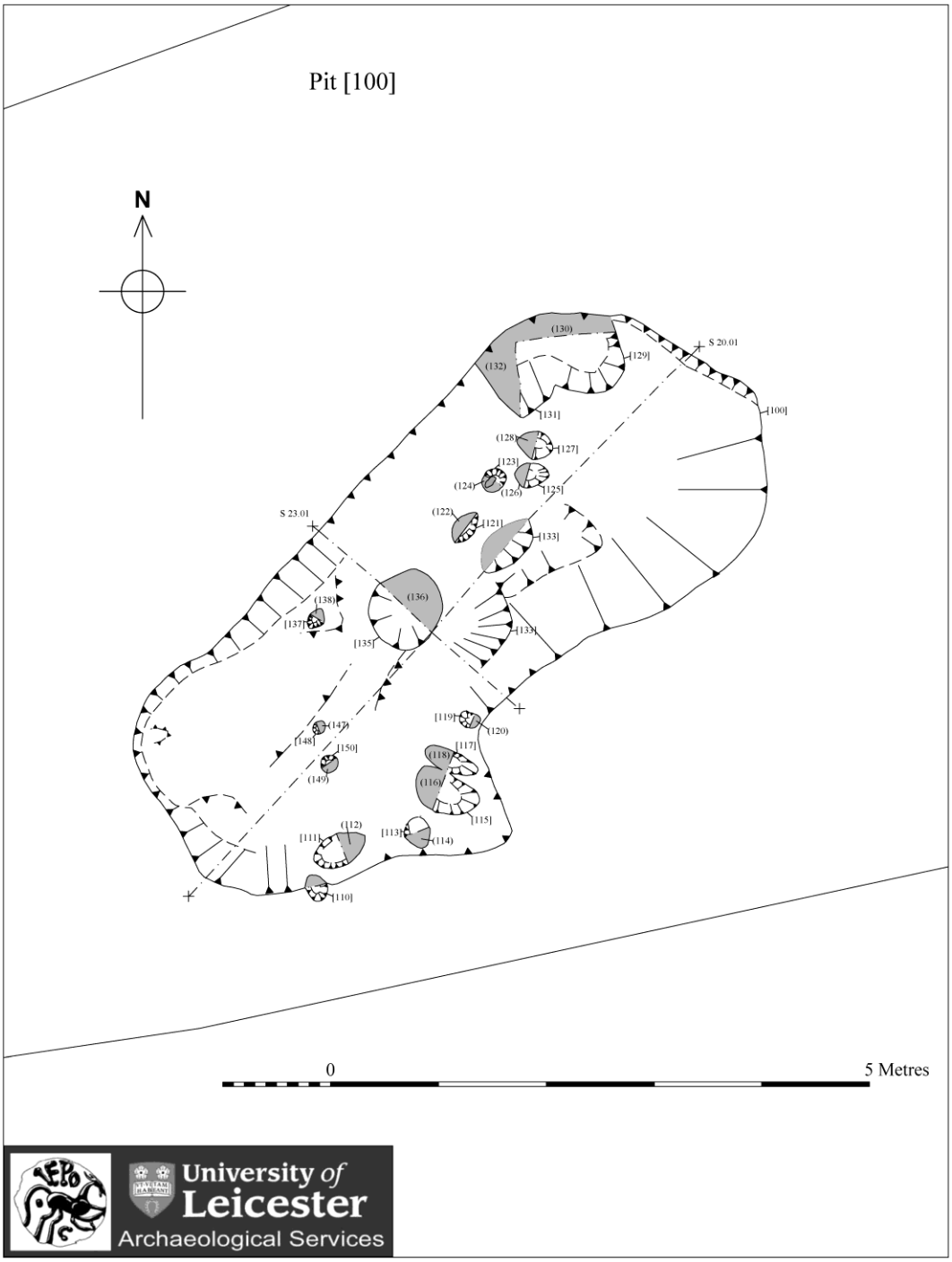

Figure 10: Post Excavation plan of Pit [100]

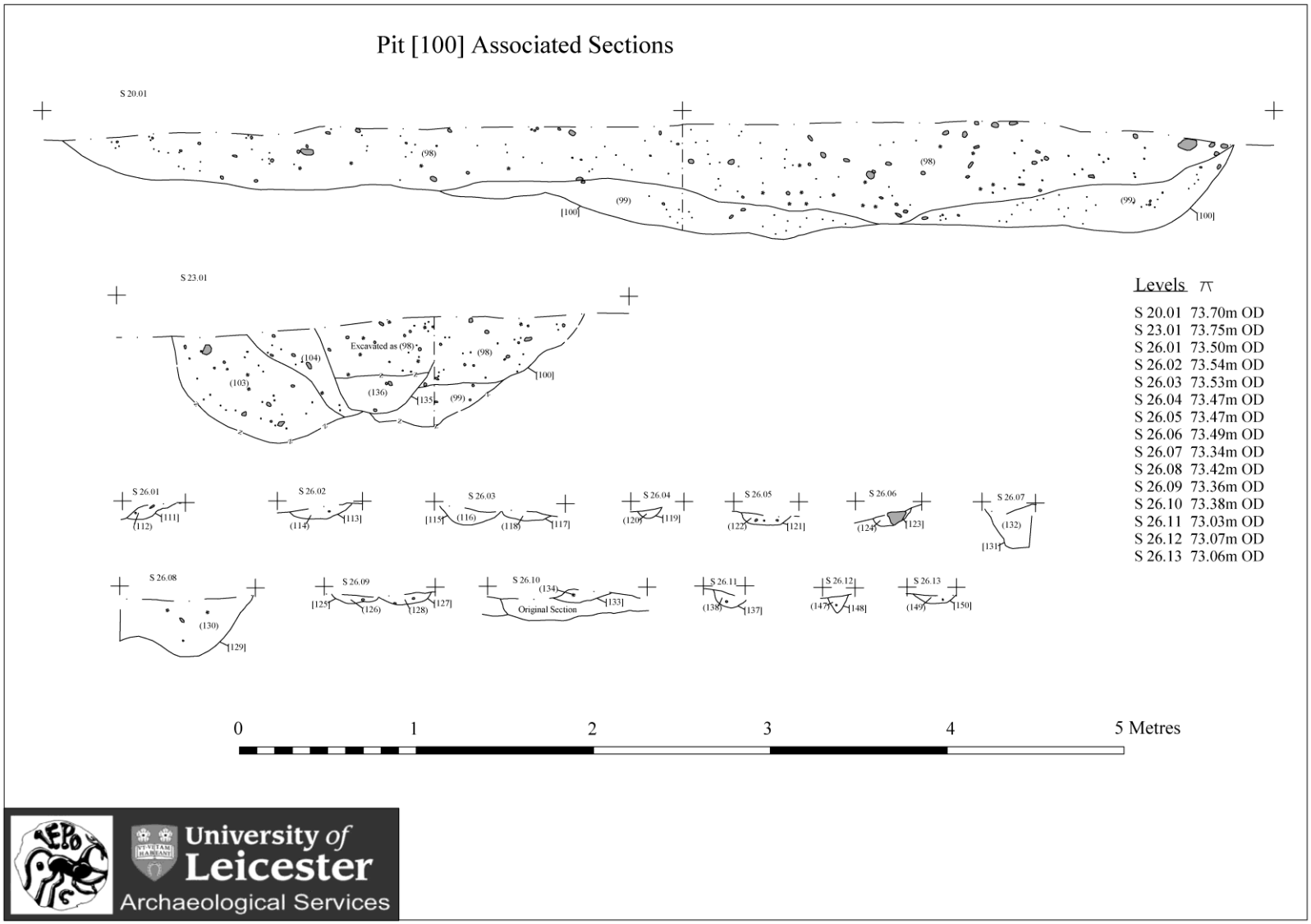

Figure 11: Recorded sections associated with Pit [100]

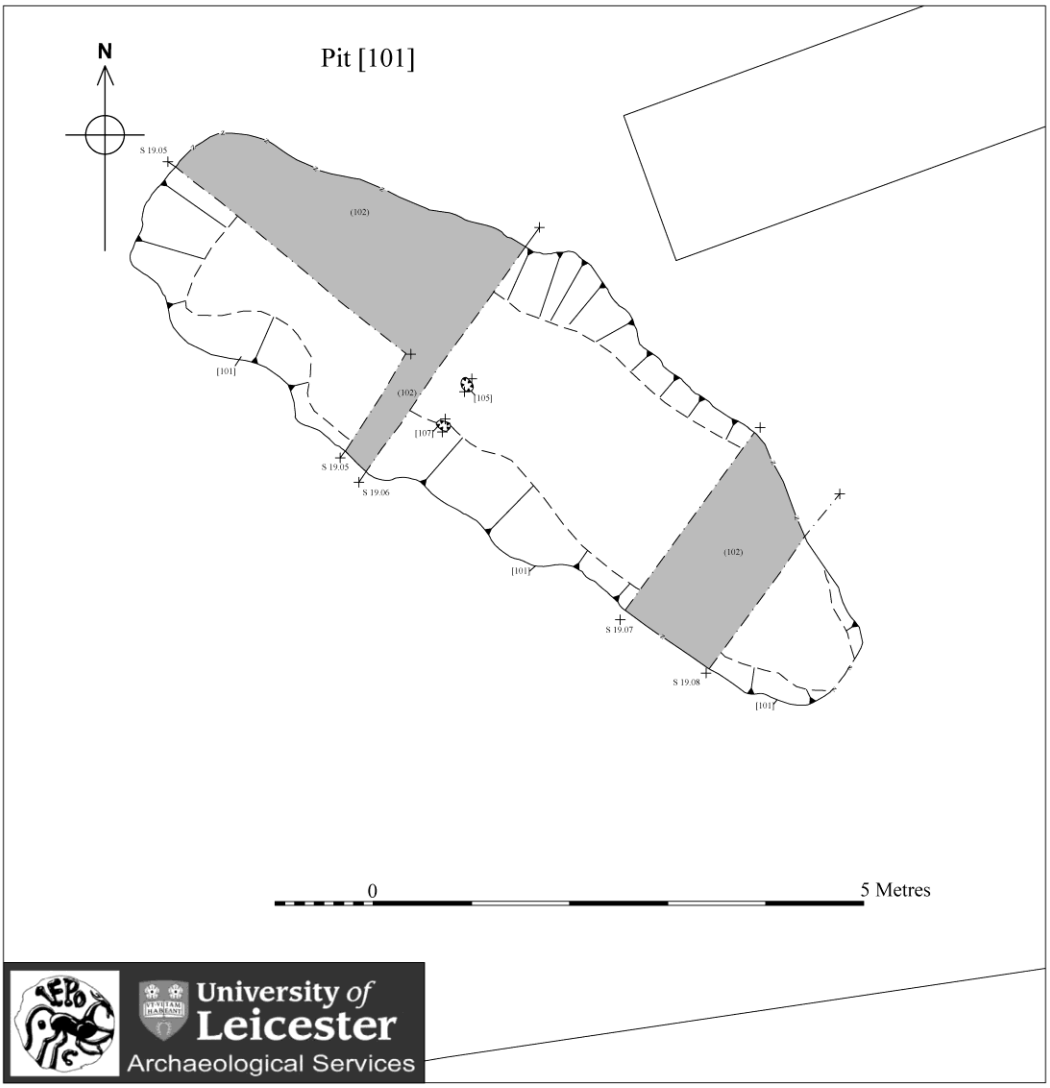

Figure 12: Post Excavation plan of Pit [101]

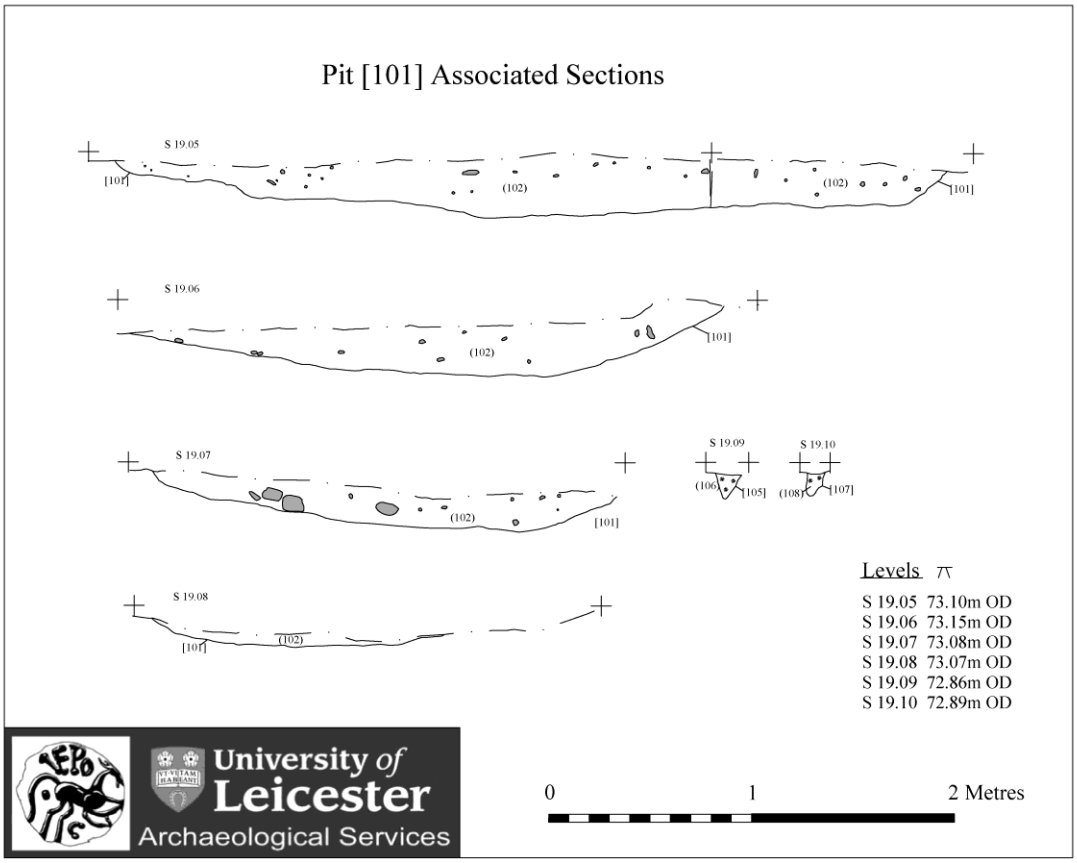

Figure 13: Recorded sections associated with Pit [101]

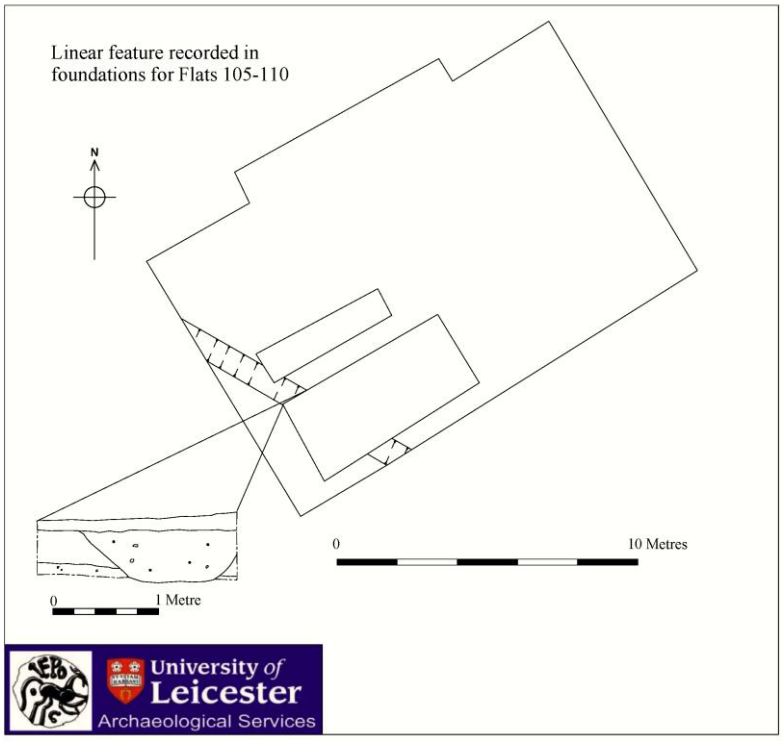

Figure 14: Linear feature recorded during the watching brief in Flat plots 105-110

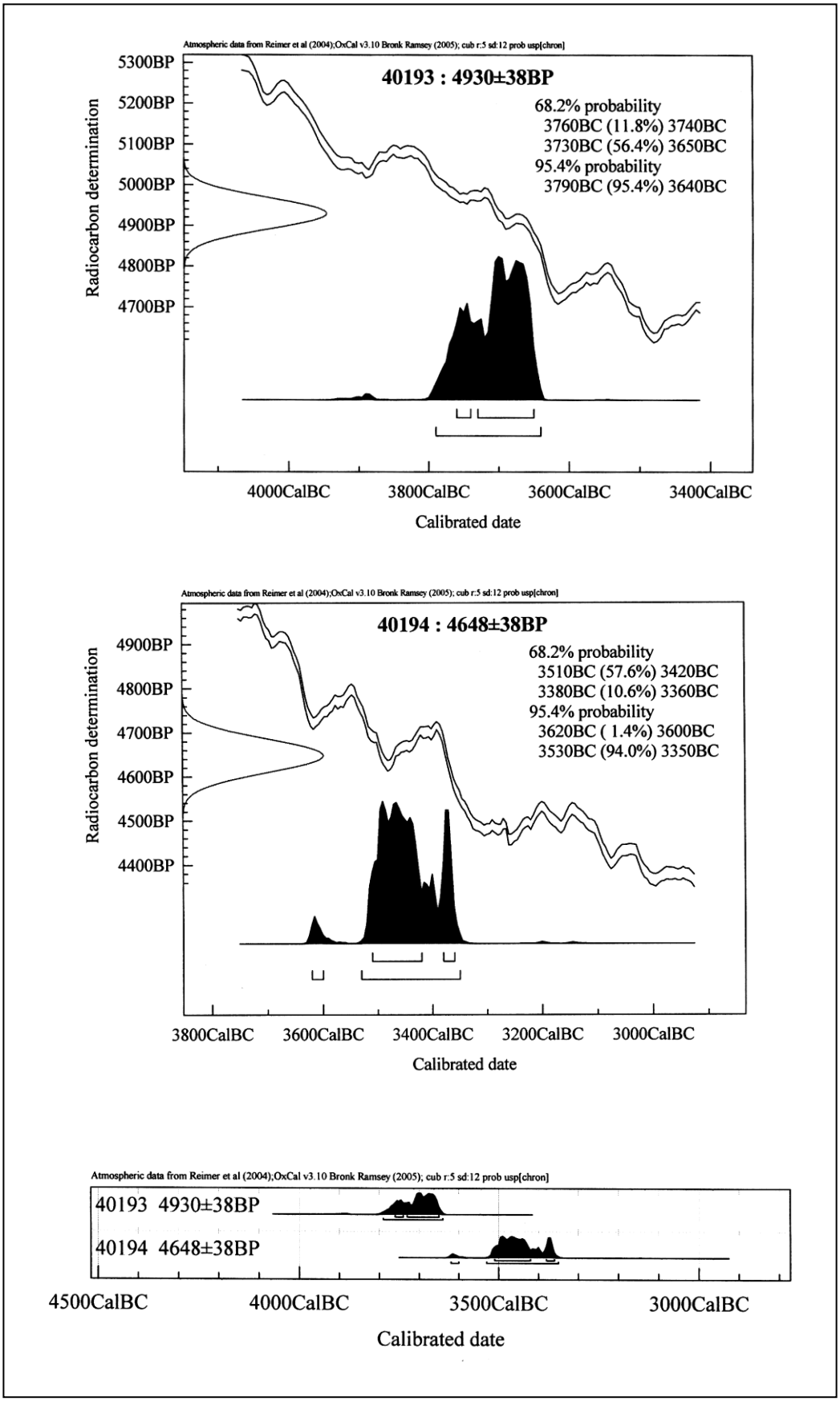

Figure 15: Results of the radiocarbon calibration using OxCal (v3.10)

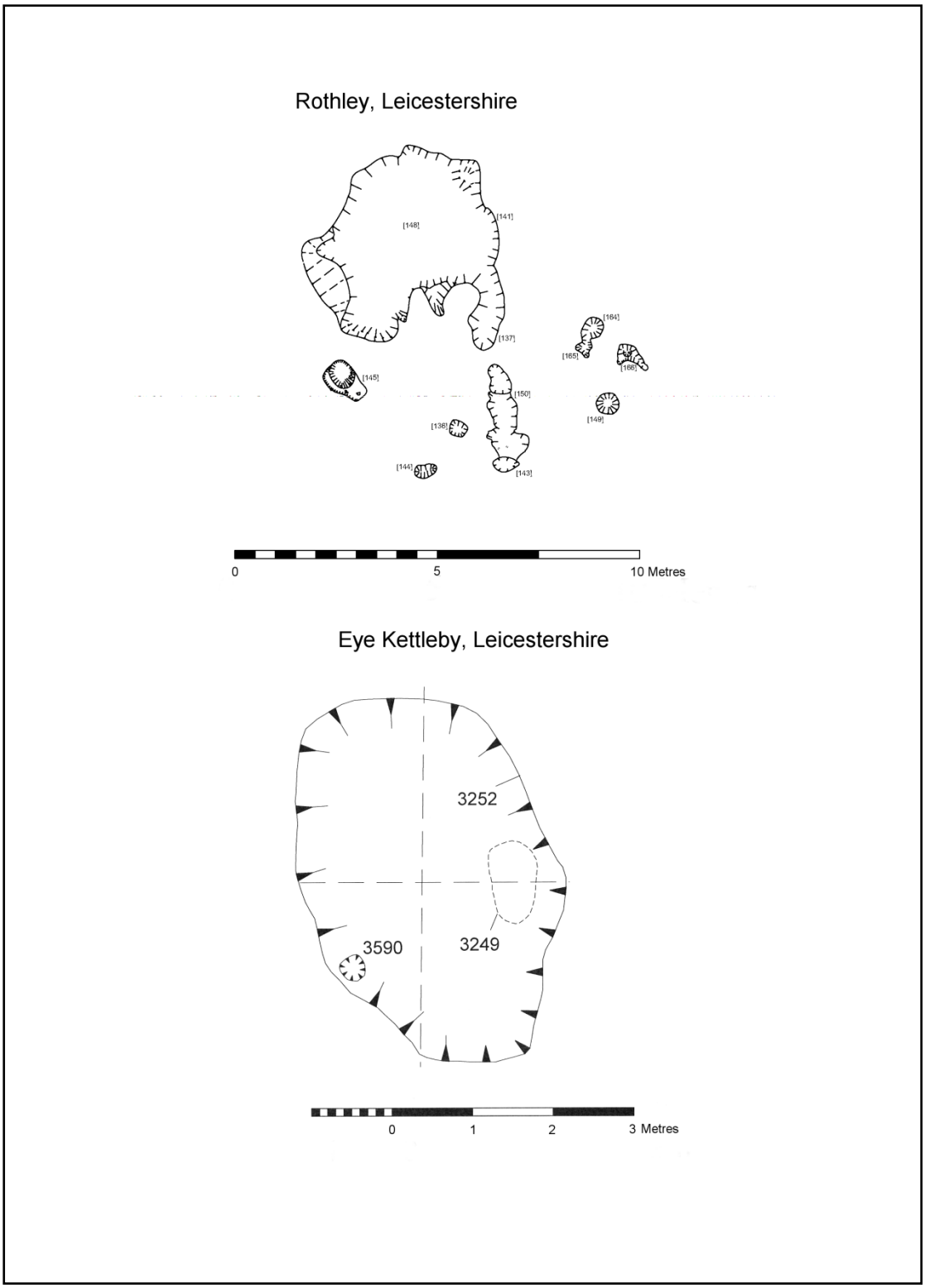

Figure 16: Comparative pits excavated at Rothley and Eye Kettleby, Leicestershire

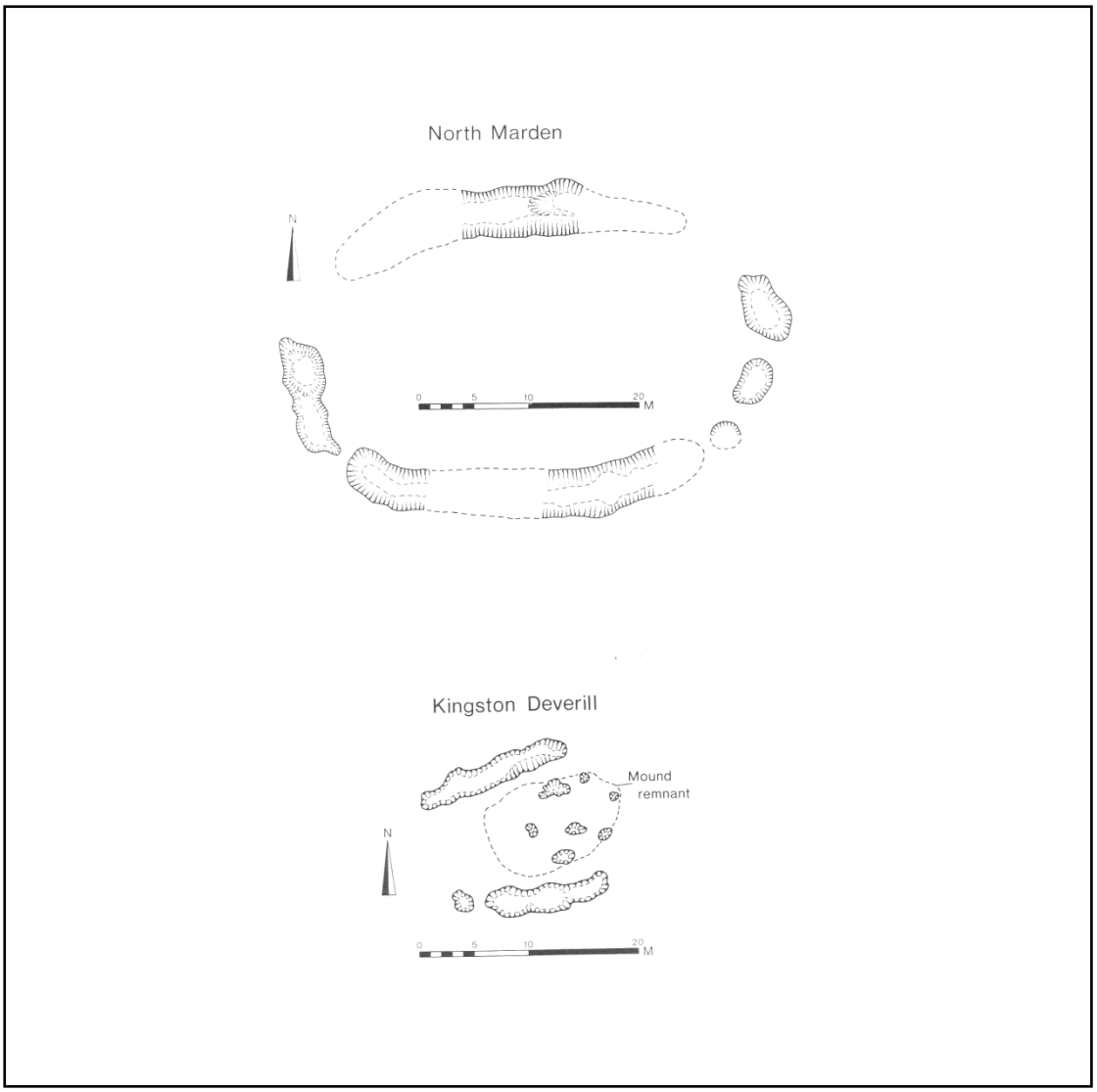

Figure 17: Long Barrows excavated at North Marden, Sussex and Kingston Deverill, Wiltshire (Kinnes 1992)

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