

**An Archaeological Watching Brief on
Land at Gloucester House, Norman Way,
Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire,
(SK 752 194)**

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By Greg Farnworth-Jones

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on land at Gloucester House, Scalford Lane, Melton Mowbray (NGR: SK 752 194), on the 28th February 2008, during geotechnical test pitting. This work was carried out on behalf of Leicestershire County Council by University of Leicester Archaeological Services in advance of development, in accordance with DOE Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning, para.30). A total of three geotechnical test pits were excavated, all three of which revealed made up ground. No archaeological finds or features were located during the watching brief. The results of which were therefore negative. The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under Accession Number: X. A88.2008

1. Introduction

1.1 This document presents the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out on land at Gloucester House, Scalford Road/Norman Way, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (NGR: SK 752 194). The archaeological assessment was undertaken on behalf of Leicestershire County Council by University of Leicester Archaeological Services.

1.2 Leicestershire County Council propose to develop land at Gloucester House, Scalford Road/Norman Way. In accordance with DOE Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning, para.30), the planning authority requested that an archaeological assessment of the site area be carried out consisting of an archaeological watching brief during geotechnical test pitting

2. Site Location

2.1 The site lies on the corner of Scalford Road and Norman Way, with access off Soho Street, just north of Melton Mowbray town centre (figure 1) and consists of a car park.

3. Geology and Topography

3.1 The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 142 indicates that the underlying geology of the site is likely to consist of Glacial Till (Boulder Clay). The site lies at a height of *c.* 77m O.D. and is fairly flat.

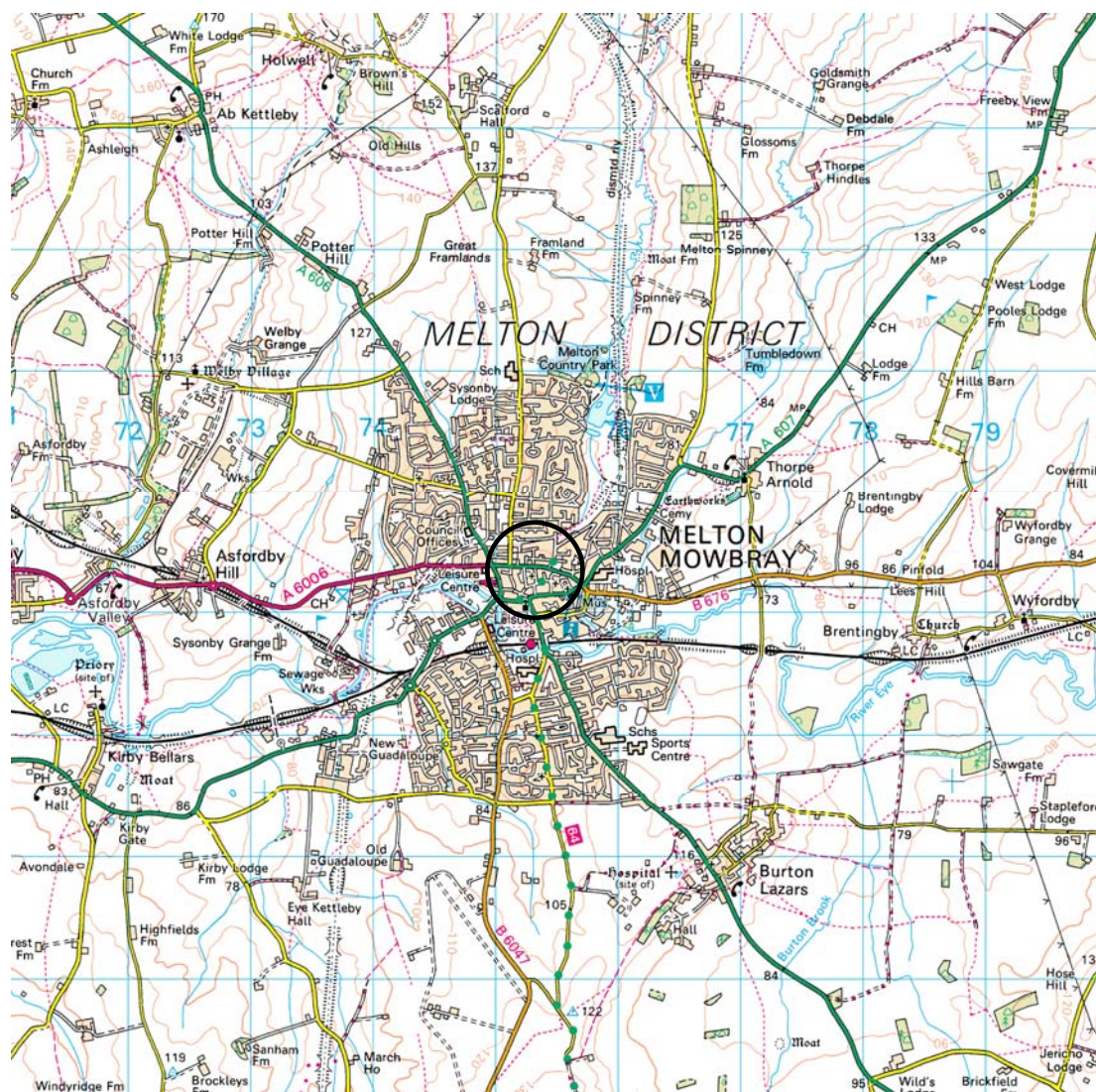


Figure 1: Site Location. Scale 1: 50 000
Licence No. 100021187

4. Archaeological Back ground (from Hunt 2005)

4.1 Melton Mowbray's origins date back to the Anglo-Saxon period where it formed part of kingdom of Mercia. The town is mentioned as 'Medeltone' in the Domesday Book and was held by Geoffrey of la Guerche. By this time it was already a sizeable village with many dependent hamlets, including Freeby, Eye Kettleby and Burton Lazars.

4.2 The Domesday Book also mentions two priests, which is thought to indicate the existence of St. Mary's Church. Melton already had a market in 1086 and was undoubtedly the principal centre for the region, but it did not obtain borough status until the 12th century under the lordship of Roger de Mowbray and his successors (Morgan 1994). By the medieval period it had become a prosperous town in the centre of a rich agricultural region.

4.3 The following are details of sites in the vicinity of the development area, listed in the Historic Environment record (HER). There is evidence of considerable archaeological activity from many periods throughout Melton Mowbray and neighbouring villages.

4.3.1 A few prehistoric finds and sites have been located close to the application area. These include a flint scraper of Mesolithic or Early Neolithic date (MLE7078), found west of Mowbray Court and a series of pits dated to the Neolithic at the former Police Station west of the Mount School (MLE9229). Evaluations on this site (Finn 2001) also uncovered evidence of Iron Age and Bronze Age activity (MLE9232 & MLE9233). Finds of a Bronze Age (MLE6387) and Iron Age date (MLE3948) have been discovered in St. Mary's Way.

4.3.2 There are several Roman sites and finds listed on the HER in and around Melton, although most of them lie outside the centre of the site and not close to the application area. However, three phases of occupation were revealed during an evaluation on waste land on the corner of King Street and Windsor Street, 100m east of the site, the first including two ditches dated to the 1st Century AD and two gullies also dated to the Roman period (MLE3945).

4.3.3 Evidence of Anglo-Saxon occupation was discovered during the evaluations of 2001, mentioned above. These included ditches containing pottery (MLE9231 & MLE9234). There is also evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation in Sherrard Street, 200m southeast of the application area. Other Anglo-Saxon sites in the wider area include a sunken feature building recorded at St. Mary's Hospital in Melton 1km to the east and the settlement at Eye Kettleby 4km to the south-west of the site.

4.3.4 There are several medieval sites in the vicinity of the application area which is situated within the medieval core of the town (MLE3930) to the north-west of the early medieval Market Place (MLE3931). Medieval buildings include St. Mary's Church (MLE3929), which is early medieval, a medieval chapel at St. John's Church (MLE3918), the medieval chapel at Chapel Nook (MLE3952) and Anne of Cleve's House (MLE3923). A medieval town house survives at 5, King Street (MLE3949). It is claimed that this building may be part of the original 'moat hall'. The building has a crown post roof, one of very few in the county. A map of Melton as it may have looked in AD 1500 shows this building as 'the new manor of John Mowbray'. Other sites of archaeological interest have been discovered in King Street, including four late medieval pits, uncovered during an evaluation (MLE3947) and the remains of a late medieval building (MLE3946).

4.3.5 Other medieval remains include an oven at Church Street (MLE3910), medieval burials at Scalford Road (MLE3917), 300m to the north of the site and three medieval crosses (MLE3932, MLE3933, MLE3934, MLE 3735 & MLE3974). Archaeological fieldwork carried out by ULAS in advance of development in the nearby Sherrard Street uncovered archaeological finds and features from many periods (Jones 2005). These included worked flint from the prehistoric period, pottery from the Roman period, associated with a linear feature and a gully, post-holes and pottery from the early medieval period.

5 Archaeological Objectives

5.1 The main objectives of the watching brief were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range of any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed geotechnical test pits.
- To excavate and record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To formulate a strategy for their recording in consultation with Leicestershire County Council, Environmental Department.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

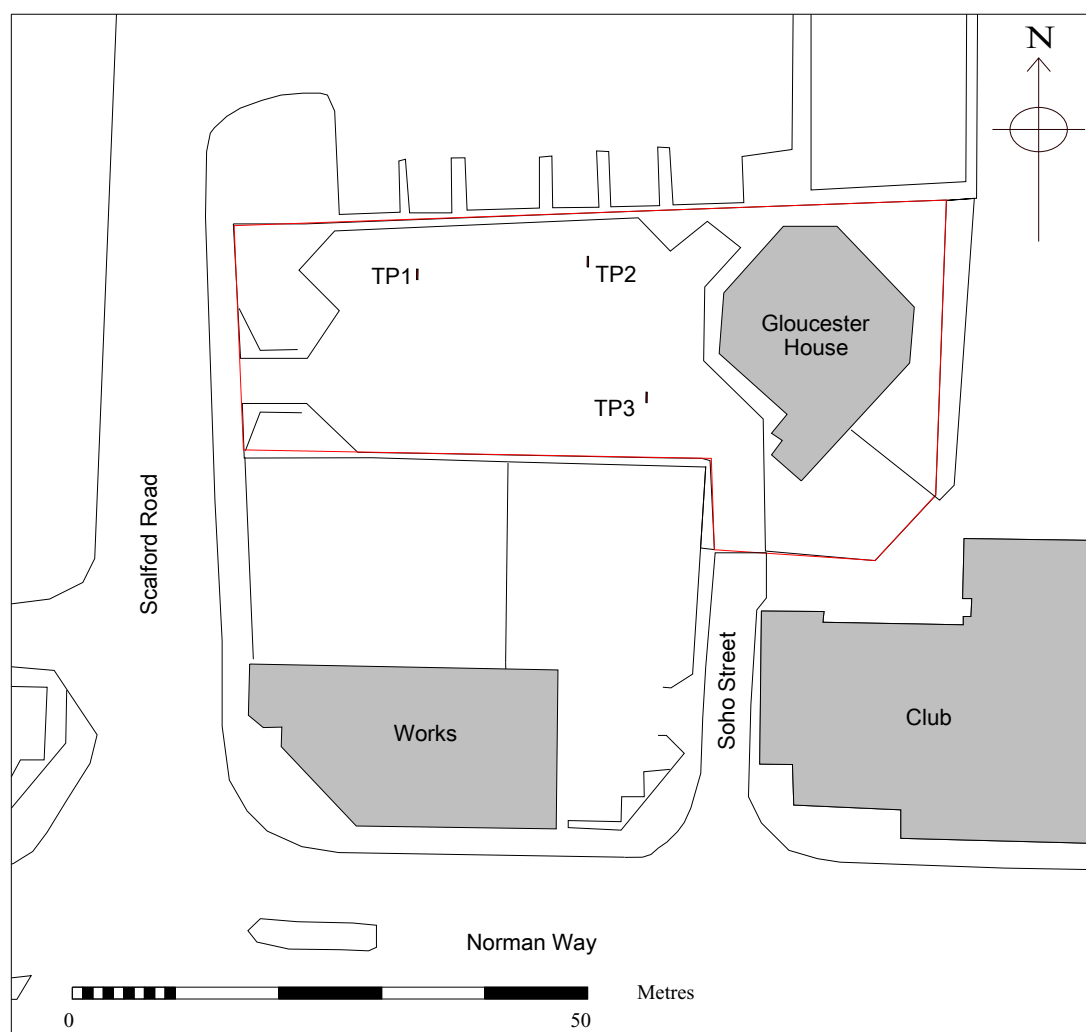


Fig.2 Site location and test pit location

6. Methodology

6.1 The archaeological watching brief involved observation of the excavation of geotechnical test pits by an experienced professional archaeologist.

6.2 The work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists' (IFA) *Code of Conduct* and the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological watching briefs and Excavations* (2001).

6.3 Three geotechnical pits were excavated using a JCB 3CX. Following their excavation, all of the geotechnical pits were examined and recorded by written record and photographs.

6.4 All archaeological deposits were to be excavated and recorded as appropriate to establish the stratigraphic and chronological sequence of deposits, recognising and excavating structural evidence and recovering economic, artefactual and environmental evidence. Particular attention was paid to the potential for buried palaeosols and environmental potential in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.

6.5 Sections were to be drawn as appropriate, including records of at least one longitudinal face of each trench.

7. Results

7.1 Test Pit 1

<i>Length:</i>	1.00m
<i>Width:</i>	0.30m
<i>Surface Height (m OD):</i>	c.77m OD
<i>Top of Natural (m OD):</i>	c.76.51mOD
<i>Depth of Trench (m OD):</i>	c.76.02m OD

Test Pit 1 was located approximately in the north-west corner of the site (fig.2). Initial machining of the test pits cut through the tarmac surface of the car park, below which was exposed to a depth of c.0.49m made up ground consisting of concrete rubble with occasional brick fragments. At c.0.49m from the surface of the trench (c.76.51m OD) the natural substratum was reached which consisted of mid yellowish brown clay. No archaeological finds or features were observed in test pit 1.

7.2 Test Pit 2

<i>Length:</i>	1.00m
<i>Width:</i>	0.30m
<i>Surface Height (m OD):</i>	c.77m OD
<i>Top of Natural (m OD):</i>	c.76.51mOD
<i>Depth of Trench (m OD):</i>	c.75.70m OD

Geotechnical test pit 2 was located to the east of test pit 1 (fig.2 & fig.3). Initial machining revealed the same concrete overburden observed in test pit 1, to a depth of c.0.55m. Below this layer was revealed the natural clay which was the same as seen in test pit 1. No archaeological finds or features were observed in test pit 2.

7.3 Test Pit 3

<i>Length:</i>	1.00m
<i>Width:</i>	0.30m
<i>Surface Height (m OD):</i>	c.77m OD
<i>Top of Natural (m OD):</i>	N/A
<i>Depth of Trench (m OD):</i>	c.75.90m OD

Geotechnical test pit 3 was located to the southeast of test pit 2 (fig.2 & fig.4). It was positioned in a garden area to reduce the impact on parking spaces for the car park. Initial machining revealed imported garden soil to a depth of c.0.20m, below which was revealed concrete overburden to a further depth of c.0.20m. The overburden was subsequently removed to reveal further made up ground down to the bottom of the trench which was c.1.1m from the surface of the test pit. Natural was not seen in test pit 3 nor were any archaeological finds or features.



Fig.3 Test pit 1 north facing



Fig. 4 Test pit 3 west facing

8. Conclusion

8.1 The archaeological watching brief undertaken on land at Gloucester House, Scalford Road/Norman Way, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire during the geotechnical trial test pitting failed to locate any significant archaeological finds or features. Therefore the results of the archaeological investigation were negative.

8.2 All three geotechnical test pits revealed made up ground to a depth of c.0.4-0.5m. It is likely that the natural substratum was truncated during the construction of the car park and so the chances of any archaeological features surviving are low.

9. Archive

9.1 The site archive [X.A88.2008], consisting of paper records, and digital colour photographs will be housed with the County Archaeological Heritage Services, Leicestershire County Council Community Services Department.

Archive accession code [X.A88.2008] contents:

Copy of Report:	Watching Brief Form:	Trench Recording Sheets:	Digital Colour Photographs:
1	1	3	7

10. Acknowledgements

10.1 I would like to thank the clients Leicestershire County Council for their assistance and co-operation. The project was managed by Patrick Clay and the fieldwork was carried out by the author, both of ULAS.

11. Bibliography

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