

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological evaluation at land to the rear of  
137-199 Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray,  
Leicestershire  
February 2007



Jason Clarke

March 2007

Report 07/24

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
MARCH 2007**

*NGR SK 7431 1923*

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALULATION  
AT LAND TO THE REAR OF 137-199 ASFORDBY ROAD  
MELTON MOWBRAY LEICESTERSHIRE  
FEBRUARY 2007  
REPORT 07/24  
X.A1.2007**

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	Archaeological Evaluation at the rear of 137-199 Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an evaluation at land to the rear of 137-199 Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. Two trenches produced evidence of Iron Age occupation with a large enclosure ditch and parallel gullies, producing pottery and animal bone.	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	CgMs consulting desk-based assessment	
Future work		
Monument type and period	Iron Age enclosures	
Significant finds	Iron Age pottery	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	Land at the rear of 137-199 Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire	
Easting	7431	
Northing	1923	
Height OD	78.9m OD	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation		
Project brief originator	Historic and Natural Environment Team, Environment and Heritage Services, Leicestershire County Council	
Project Design originator	CgMs Consulting	
Director/Supervisor	Jason Clarke	
Project Manager	Iain Soden (NA) and Karen Francis (CgMs)	
Sponsor or funding body	Miller Homes (East Midlands) Ltd	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	05/02/2007	
End date	12/02/2007	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	Location (X.A1.2007)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Title	Archaeological Evaluation at land to the rear of 137-199 Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire	
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)	Jason Clarke	
Page numbers		
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT LAND  
TO THE REAR OF 137-199 ASFORDBY ROAD,  
MELTON MOWBRAY, LEICESTERSHIRE**

*Abstract*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation at land to the rear of 137-199 Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. Two trenches produced evidence of Iron Age occupation comprising of ditches, which appear to be boundary ditches, although two parallel gullies might suggest a trackway or drove way. Iron Age and Roman pottery and animal bone were recovered from the ditch and gully deposits. One other trench produced a 20th-century brick surface of agricultural use, whilst the other trenches contained no archaeology under modern made ground.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) undertook an archaeological evaluation at land to the rear of Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire on behalf of CgMs Consulting and Miller Homes (East Midlands) Ltd during February 2007 (Fig 1).

The work was undertaken in order to inform a planning application for the construction of houses and associated infrastructure (06/00902/FUL). The excavation met the requirements of a project design prepared by CgMs Consulting (2007).

**2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

An archaeological desk-based assessment conducted by John Samuels Archaeological Consultancy (JSAC) in February 2006 identified approximately 40 SMR entries of archaeological interest within 1 km of the proposed development site (JSAC 1327/06/01). Evidence of Neolithic and Bronze Age-Iron Age settlement is located 650 m to the south-east of the site. Romano-British activity has been recorded at a number of locations with a kilometre of the site. Anglo-Saxon activity was recorded in an evaluation conducted to the south of Leicester Road; as well as finds indicative of a Saxon burial in the churchyard at Saxonby, c. 800m south-west of the proposed development site.

Historically the area of the proposed development site is located in the township of Sysonby. Sysonby was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 AD, when it comprised of arable land and meadow. The site was enclosed during the early 17th Century and was still recorded as pasture and arable land on the 1845 tithe map.

**3 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

The site is located in an area of pastoral land, situated to the south of Asfordby Road, on the south-west side of Melton Mowbray, covering an area of 4.27 acres (centred on NGR SK 7431 1923). The embankment of a disused railway bounds the south-eastern part of site and the River Eye forms the southern boundary. Housing bounds the north and west of the site.

The geology of the site consisted of Boulder Clay overlying gravels, with river channel deposits to the south. The site slopes gently downward, south towards the river from a level of about 80m above OD.

Recent land use in the 20th century includes a market garden and plant nursery up until the 1970s when it was used as a vehicle scrap yard.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

All works were conducted in accordance with the IFA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (1995), the Code of Conduct, Standards, Guidelines and Practises of Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999).

A total of eleven trenches were excavated, representing a 5% sample of the proposed development site (Fig 2). They were targeted on areas of maximum development impact, house foundations and the land of the proposed balancing pond.

A mechanical excavator with a 2m flat ditching bucket was used to excavate topsoil and overburden to archaeological levels. All archaeological features were examined by hand to determine their nature. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures (NA 2003). All archaeological features were given a separate context number, features were described on pro-forma context sheets, which included details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and associated finds. A photographic record was kept using monochrome and colour slide film.

## 5 RESULTS

A total of eleven trenches were excavated totalling 700sq m. Trench 2 was unexcavated due it being located within the front garden of the current occupiers property and contained too many services to safely excavate. Trenches 7, 11 and 12 contained archaeological remains and are described below. No archaeological features were present within the other trenches excavated and their deposit make up are described in Appendix 1 with a full context inventory.

### **Trench 7**

Measuring 20m long by 2m wide, Trench 7 was aligned north-south (Figs 2 and 3). Natural geology was mid orange brown sandy clay (704) and was encountered at a depth of 0.9m. Overlying 0.3m of subsoil a brick surface (703) was encountered at a depth 0.3m. Overlying this was topsoil, 0.3m thick.

#### **Brick surface 703**

A brick surface measuring 1sq m was located at a depth of 0.3m, on top of the subsoil. The brick surface was identified as the surface of an out building, which was built in the early 20th century when the land was used as nursery and small holding and was demolished in the 1980's. No other archaeological features were present within Trench 7.

### **Trench 11**

Aligned north-east to south-west Trench 11 measures 50m long and 2m wide (Fig 2 and 3). Natural geology comprising mid orange-brown sandy clay (1111) was encountered at a depth of 0.5m. Overlying this was grey sandy clay (1102), 0.2m in thickness, overlain by mid grey sandy clay topsoil, 0.3m thick. Ditches [1104], [1106], [1108] and [1110] were located within Trench 11.

#### *Ditch [1104]*

Ditch [1104] aligned north-south cut natural geology (1111) (Figs 2 and 3). Measuring 1.8m in wide and 0.35m deep, the ditch had a concave base and was filled by a single mid grey sandy clay (1103). One fragment of black shell tempered Iron Age pottery was found.

#### *Ditch [1106]*

Ditch [1106] was located 0.1m east of ditch [1104], was aligned north-south and cuts natural geology (1111). Measuring 2.1m wide and 0.3m ditch had a flat base. The single fill

comprised mid grey sandy clay (1105), and three sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered.

*Ditch [1108]*

Ditch [1108] was aligned north-south and cuts natural geology (1111). It measures 0.46m in width and 0.2m in depth and had a V-shaped profile. The fill, (1107) comprised mid grey sandy clay. No finds were recovered from this deposit.

*Ditch [1110]*

Ditch [1110] was aligned north-south and cuts natural geology (1111). It Measures 0.58m in width and 0.2m in depth with a U-shaped profile. The fill, (1109) comprises mid grey sandy clay. One sherd of shell tempered Iron Age pottery was recovered from this deposit. The ditch was located 6m north of ditch [1108] and aligned almost parallel. This may have formed a droveway or road.

**Trench 12**

Trench 12 was aligned north south and was 30m in length. Natural geology was a mid orange-brown sandy clay (1203) at a depth of 0.55m; this was overlain by grey sandy clay, to a depth of 0.25m and topsoil that measured 0.3m in depth. The trench contained the junction of ditches.

*Ditch [1206]*

Ditch [1206] was aligned north-west to south-east, and cut natural geology (1203). It measured 2.1m in width and 1m in depth. The primary fill (1205) comprised mid grey black sandy clay. Nine sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from this fill. The upper fill, (1204) comprised mid grey sandy clay and contained thirteen sherds of Iron Age pottery and animal bones. Ditch [1206] was cut by ditch [1208].

*Ditch [1208]*

Ditch [1208] was aligned north-west to south-east and cuts ditch [1206]. It measured 0.8m in width and 0.35m in depth. Fill (1207) comprises mid grey sandy clay and animal bone was recovered from this deposit.

**6 FINDS**

**The Iron Age pottery**                      Andy Chapman

A total of 27 sherds of pottery, weighing 605g, were recovered. Five sherds came from four contexts in Trench 11: (1102) subsoil; (1103) the fill of ditch [1104]; (1105) the fill of ditch [1106], and (1109) the fill of ditch [1110]. The bulk of the material, 22 sherds weighing 540g, came from the primary fill (1205) and the secondary fill (1204) of ditch [1206] in Trench 12.

With the exception of three small body sherds and one bowl rim, the pottery is all in a fabric that contains dense pieces of crushed shell. The sherds typically have a grey to grey/black core, with the internal and external surfaces varying from grey/black to brown and bright orange.

The shelly fabric mainly comes from hand-built, thick-walled vessels, 8-14mm thick. There are plain body sherds, but the material from ditch [1206] includes a number of sherds from at least one scored ware vessel, as well as sherds from a thick flat base. Such thick-walled storage jars are characteristic of the middle Iron Age ceramic tradition, although production also continued into the late Iron Age, certainly into the 1st century BC.

The assemblage from ditch [1206] includes three body sherds in hard, sandy fabrics



containing small quartz inclusions. Two of these are thin-walled sherds, 5 and 7mm thick, with dark grey cores and surfaces, with smoothed to lightly burnished surfaces, while the other is thin-walled, grey throughout with a coarse surface. The darker sherds are probably from bowls dating to the 1st century BC, while the greyware-type sherd is likely to date from the 1st century AD. The assemblage from the primary fill (1205) of ditch [1206] also includes a rim sherd in a grog-tempered fabric, with a grey core and brown to grey-brown surfaces. This comes from a necked-bowl with a pronounced angular shoulder or carination. This vessel is likely to date to the first half of the 1st century AD.

The pottery assemblage indicates that the occupation can be dated to the late Iron Age, from the 1st century BC to the mid-1st century AD.

#### **Animal bone** Karen Deighton

##### *Method*

Animal bone was collected from 5 contexts by hand during the course of excavation. All except the bone from (1102) was from the Iron Age ditches. This material was scanned to determine the species present, the condition of the bone and the potential for further analysis.

##### *Results*

Preservation was reasonable with little surface abrasion noted. However fragmentation was fairly heavy. Evidence for canid gnawing was restricted to one context (1204). Only a single example of butchery evidence was observed i.e. a chop mark on a posterior Bos scapula. No evidence of burning was apparent.

##### *Taxonomic distribution*

Table: 1 Taxa by context

Context	Feature number	<i>Bos</i> (cattle)	<i>Equus</i> (horse)	<i>Ovicaprid</i> (sheep/goat)	Small ungulate	Total
1102		1				1
1105	1106			1		1
1204	1206	2	3	3		8
1205	1206	3				3
1207	1208				1	1
Total		6	3	4	1	14

##### *Conclusion*

The bones are from common domestic species; little can be said of the animal economy of the site with such a small assemblage, other than a list of some of the species associated with it. Potential for further analysis is severely restricted by the paucity of material.

## **7 DISCUSSION**

Archaeological features were found exclusively on the eastern side of the site. The previous land use may have affected the survival of features elsewhere. Trenches 5 and 6 showed a high level of truncation possibly from the construction of a duck pond in the 1980s. Trench 9 contained a layer of car parts and modern domestic rubbish, left over from land use as a scrap yard in the 1970s. When the yard went out of use the remaining parts were disposed of by being buried. The brick surface seen in Trench 7 also reflects the previous land use of the proposed development site as a market garden and nursery, which maybe a surface for a greenhouse.

Late Iron Age ditches were present in Trenches 11 and 12. In Trench 11 parallel ditches [1108] and [1110] were located 6m apart and appear to form a north-west to south-east aligned trackway or driveway. Located to the west of ditches [1108] and [1110] were ditches [1104] and [1106], which produced Iron Age pottery and appear to be the same features as the ditches found in Trench 12. Ditches [1206] and [1208] in Trench 12 also produced late Iron Age pottery and animal bone.

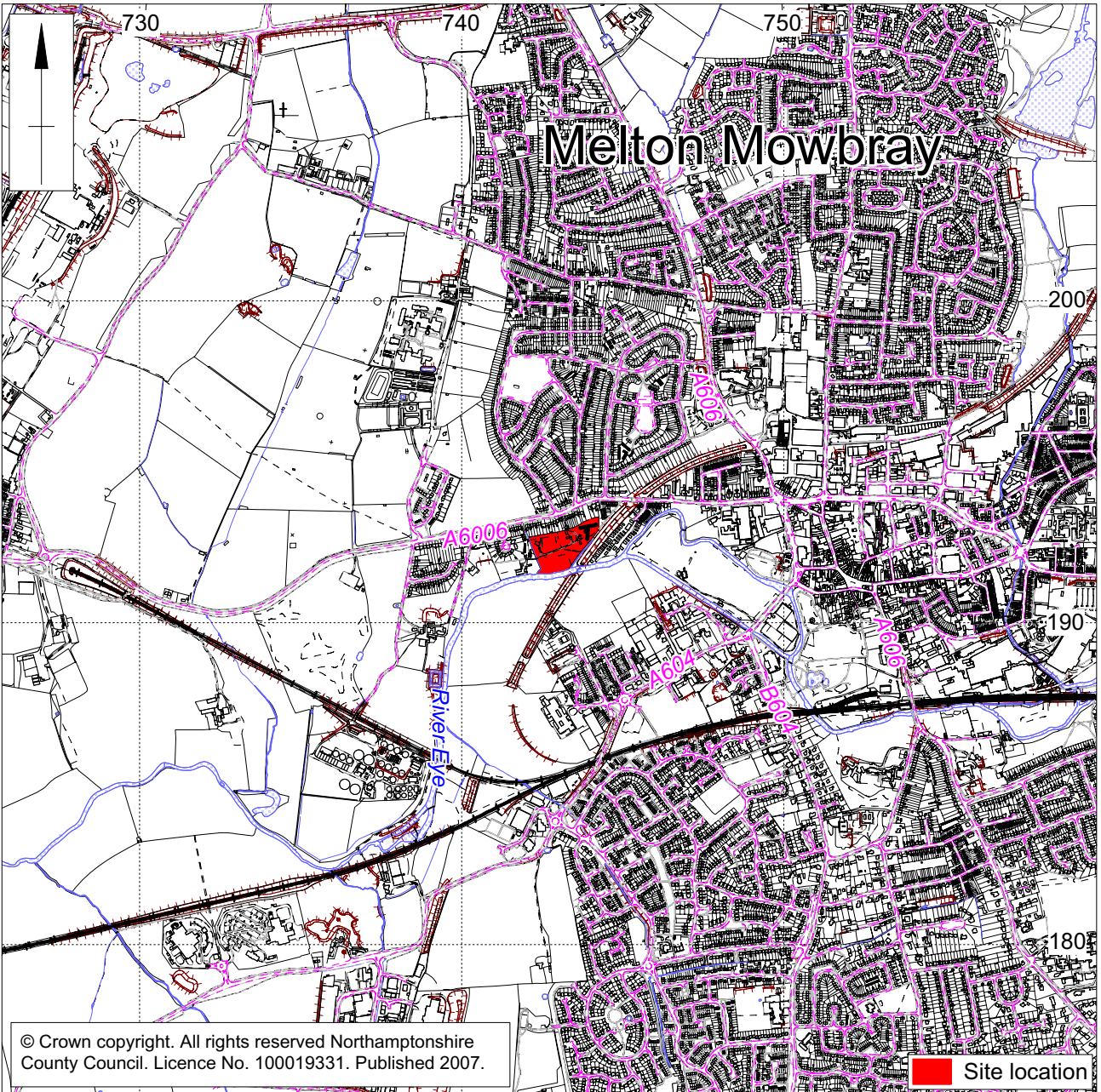
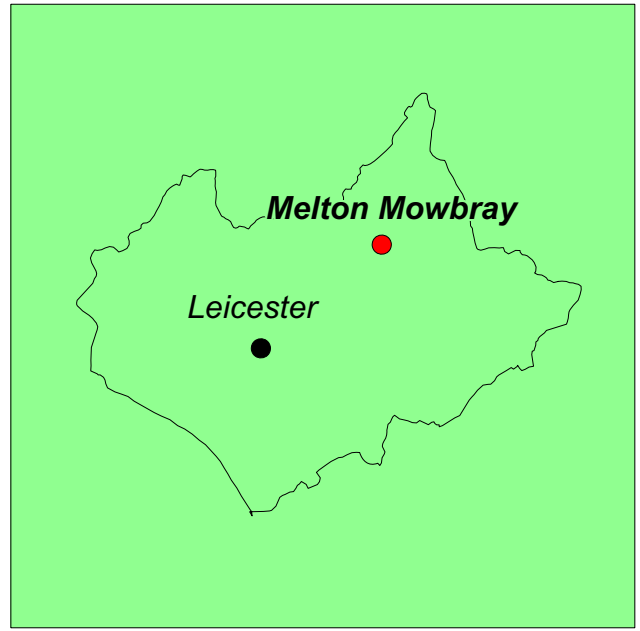
Ditch [1206] is a significant size and may form a boundary, pottery and animal bone recovered suggest domestic occupation nearby. The negative results from other trenches in the evaluation suggests that any occupation focus would have been located to the east of Trenches 11 and 12 and therefore probably removed by modern development and the railway embankment.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

CgMs Consulting 2007 A written scheme of investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation at the rear of 137-199 Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire

English Heritage 1991 Management of Archaeological Projects

IFA 1999 Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Evaluation  
Institute of Field Archaeologists

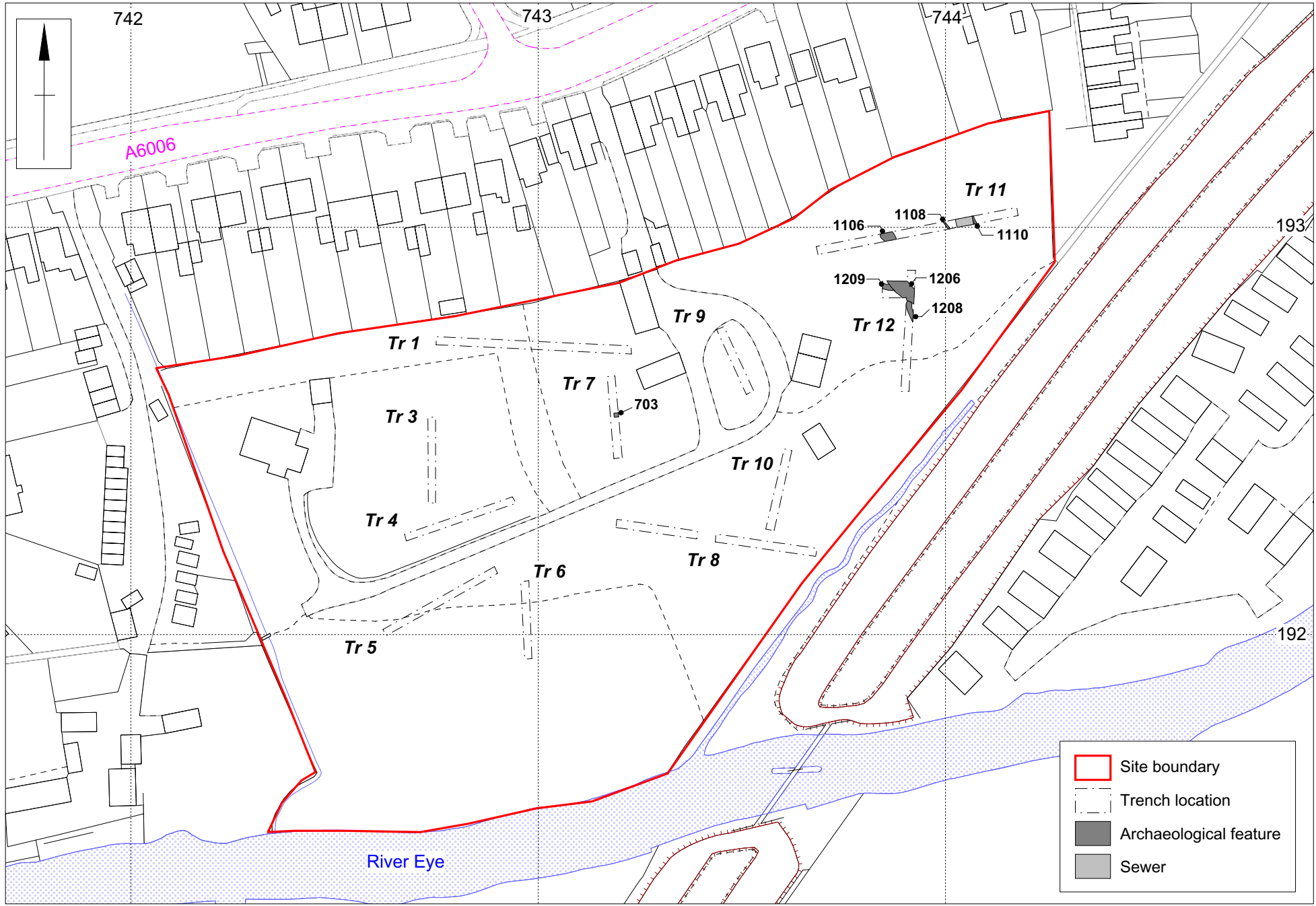


Scale 1:20,000

Site location Fig 1

Scale 1:1250

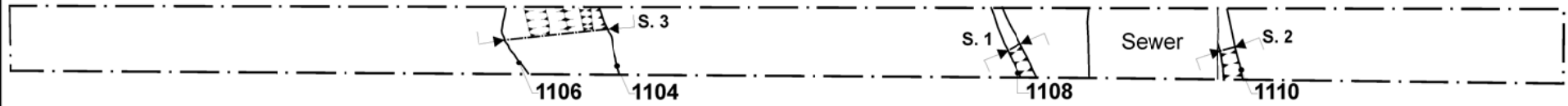
Trench location Fig 2



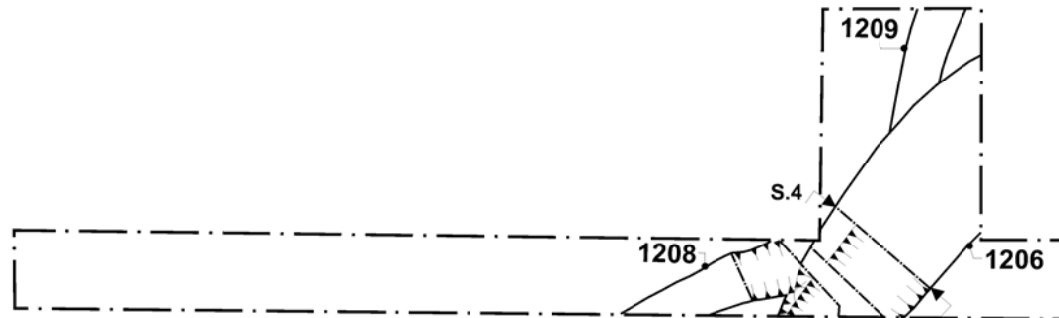
**Trench 7**



**Trench 11**

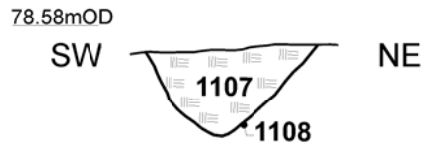


**Trench 12**



Trenches 7, 11 and 12 Fig 3

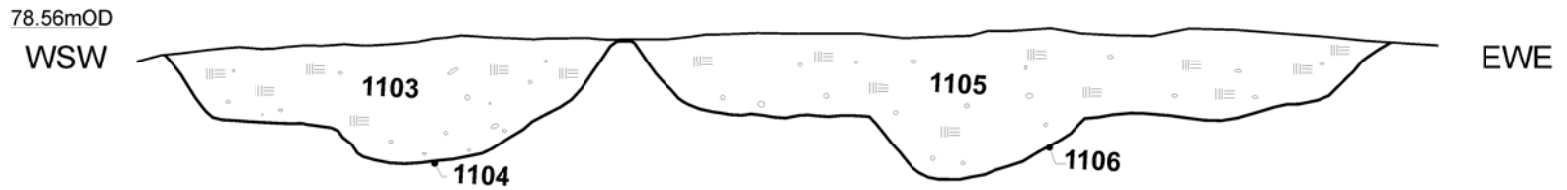
**Section 1 - Trench 11**



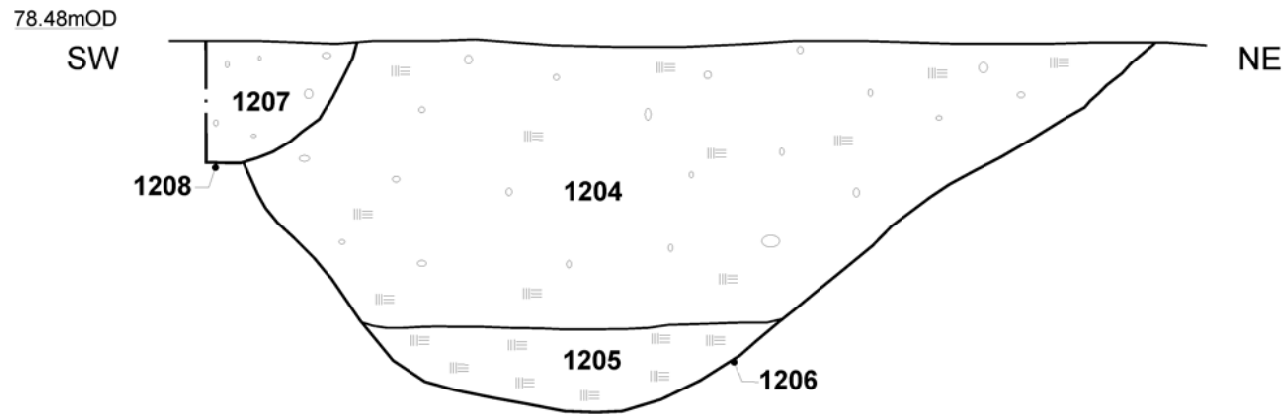
**Section 2 - Trench 11**



**Section 3 - Trench 11**



**Section 4 - Trench 12**



 Clay







Plate 1: Trench 11, looking east





Plate 2: Ditches [1104] and [1106], looking south-east, in trench 11



Plate 3: Ditch [1206] cut by ditch [1208], looking north, in trench 12





Plate 4: Trench 12, looking south, showing ditches [1206] and [1208]

**A1: SITE DATA***Table 2: Site context data*

Trench No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
1	101	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.3m thick	
	102	Subsoil	Grey sandy clay. 0.5m thick	
	103	Natural	Natural. Mid orange brown sandy clay	
2			Trench unexcavated	
3	301	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.3m thick	
	302	Subsoil	Grey sandy clay. 0.7m thick	
	303	Natural	Mid orange brown sandy clay	
4	401	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.3m thick	
	402	Subsoil	Grey sandy clay. 0.3m thick	
	403	Natural	Orange brown sandy clay	
5	501	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.2m thick	
	502	Layer	Modern Make-up layer. 1m thick. Excavation curtailed	
6	601	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.2m thick	
	602	Layer	Modern Make-up layer. 1m thick. Excavation curtailed	
7	701	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.25m thick	
	702	Subsoil	Grey sandy clay. 0.3m thick	
	703	Surface	20 <sup>th</sup> Century brick surface, used as greenhouse. 1Sq m seen.	
	704	Natural	Orange brown sandy clay	
8	801	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.3m thick	
	802	Subsoil	Grey sandy clay. 0.4m thick	
	803	Deposit	Dark grey clay silt, river deposit	
	804	Natural	Orange brown sandy clay	
9	901	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.2m thick	
	902	Layer	Modern rubbish tipping layer. 0.3m thick	

Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray

Trench No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
	903	Subsoil	Grey sandy clay. 0.5m thick	
	904	Natural	Mid orange brown sandy clay	
10	1001	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.4m thick	
	1002	Subsoil	Grey sandy clay. 0.4m thick	
	1003	Deposit	Light grey clay silt river deposits, previous course of the River Eye	
	1004	Natural	Orange brown sandy clay	
11	1101	Topsoil	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.4m thick	
	1102	Subsoil	Grey sandy clay. 0.4m thick	Animal bone
	1103	Deposit	Mid grey silty clay. 0.32m depth, 1.18m width. Fill of [1104]	Iron Age pottery
	1104	Cut	Cut of Ditch, filled by (1103)	
	1105	Deposit	Mid grey silty clay. 0.37m depth, 2m width. Fill of [1106]	Iron Age pottery Animal bone
	1106	Cut	Cut of Ditch, filled by (1105)	
	1107	Deposit	Grey black silty clay. 0.23m depth, 0.45m width. Fill of [1108]	Iron Age pottery
	1108	Cut	Cut of Gully. Filled by (1107)	
	1109	Deposit	Grey black silty clay. 0.2m depth, 0.49m width. Fill of [1110]	
	1110	Cut	Cut of gully. Filled by (1109)	
	1111	Natural	Mid orange brown sandy clay	
12	1201	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy clay. 0.3m thick	
	1202	Subsoil	Dark grey brown sandy clay. 0.7m thick	
	1203	Natural	Mid orange brown sandy clay	
	1204	Deposit	Mid black sandy clay. 0.75m depth, 2.1m width. Fill of [1206], cut by [1208]	Iron Age pottery and animal bone
	1205	Deposit	Mid grey sandy clay. 0.2m depth, 1.1m width. Fill of [1206] below (1204)	Iron Age pottery and Animal bone
	1206	Cut	Cut of ditch. Filled by (1204) and (1205). 0.95m depth, 2.1m width (truncated)	
	1207	Deposit	Mid black grey sandy clay. 0.5m depth, 1m width. Fill of [1208]	Animal bone

Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray

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<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Deposit Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Artefact types</b>
	1208	Cut	Cut of ditch. Filled by (1207). Cuts (1204)	
	1209	Cut	Cut of ditch. Unexcavated	