



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Northamptonshire Archaeology

**TRIAL TRENCHING ON
LAND OFF WINDSOR STREET
MELTON MOWBRAY, LEICESTERSHIRE
JUNE 2007**



Stephen Morris

July 2007

Report 07/86

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Windsor Street, Melton mowbray	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Trial trenching was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology, which identified four ditches with recuts, one of which contained a single medieval pottery sherd, and another contained post-medieval pottery. The remaining ditches with recuts were undated and were sealed by a remnant of an undated buried soil. The post-medieval dated ditch lay square to King Street, all the other ditches were square to Windsor Street. A single undated post-hole was also excavated. Other features were modern in date, which included a brick lined well.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Trial trenching	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	Urban development	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Unknown	
Current Land use	Building clearance	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Strip, Plan and Record with watching brief, final phase	
Monument type/ period	Medieval/post-medieval plot boundaries	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address (including postcode)	Windsor House, Windsor Street	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	Approx 1500 sq m	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. numbers)	4753 3192	
Height OD	77m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Historic and Natural Environment Team	
Project Design originator	Leicestershire County Council	
Director/Supervisor	Stephen Morris	
Project Manager	Iain Soden	
Sponsor or funding body	Levitt Partnership	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	May 2007	
End date	May 2007	
ARCHIVES		
	Location (X. A75. 2007)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	1b/w film, 1colour film	Pottery, bone, slag
Paper	1 file, 1 section sheet, 1 plan sheet	
Digital	Photo's	
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Trial trenching on land off Windsor Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire	
Serial title & volume	07/86	
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Abstract

Trial trenching was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land off Windsor Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. Four ditches with recuts were identified, one of which contained a single medieval pottery sherd, and another contained post-medieval pottery. The remaining ditches with recuts were undated and were sealed by a remnant of an undated buried soil. The post-medieval dated ditch lay square to King Street, all the other ditches were square to Windsor Street. A single undated posthole was also excavated. Other features were modern in date, which included a brick-lined well.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by the Levitt Partnership to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land off Windsor Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, prior to residential and commercial development (NGR: SK 753 192, Fig 1). The site occupies an area of 0.1275 ha. The general objective of the evaluation was to identify any evidence for the survival of buried archaeological remains that may be threatened by development of the site, and to determine the depth of burial, character, date, extent and state of preservation of any such remains.

2 BACKGROUND

The development site lies within the historic centre of Melton Mowbray, on the corner of Windsor Street and King Street. The 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey of late 19th century Melton Mowbray, shows the site to be largely undeveloped, except for a building in the central to southern side. The site appears to have remained unchanged into the mid 20th century, when a General Post Office was constructed. The post office has recently been demolished and cleared in preparation for the proposed development. An approximately 3m deep cellar from the post office building occupied the central part of the Windsor Street frontage.

An archaeological evaluation carried out to the east side of the site, in advance of the construction of the police station, revealed Iron Age, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval ditches, gullies and pits (MLE15937 and 15938). On the corner of Windsor Street and King Street to the west of the

site an evaluation identified occupation that included two ditches dated to the 1st century AD and two other Romano-British gullies (MLE 3947). Four late medieval pits represent later activity (MLE 3945). To the south of the site on land off Sherrard Street an evaluation and a subsequent excavation revealed evidence of Saxo-Norman (MLE 9481), medieval (MLE 9482) and post-medieval occupation (MLE 9483), (Leicestershire County Council 2007 (LCC 2007)).

Observations show that modern, Victorian and late medieval buildings nearby all relate to the existing pavement levels without significant changes in level and for this reason it was thought likely that significant archaeology could survive within a short distance of the surface. There was no indication as to the thickness of this archaeology. The regular redevelopment of frontages (as indicated by the variety of dates of frontage buildings) suggests that reuse of the plot may have led to truncation of earlier deposits and structures.

The widening of the road and pavements of the modern layout at this point (compared to further along the street) suggest that hereabouts the historic frontage may lie at least partly under the modern footpath.

The site is on generally level ground at *c*77m aOD. The geology of the area is predominantly glacio-fluvial sand and gravels, with glacio-lacustrine deposits on the southern area of the site (British Geological Survey of England and Wales, Melton, Sheet 142).

3 METHODOLOGY

Trial excavation of three trenches (Trenches 1, 2 and 3) totalled 35 linear metres. The trenches were distributed around the site primarily within the footprint of the new-build where this coincides with the two probable historic street frontages. The trenches were distanced from a large modern cellar in the centre of the Windsor Street frontage.

Machine-excavation removed the modern overburden consisting of tarmac surface and a make-up/levelling layer of modern building debris. In addition homogenous soils were removed by machine using a flat bladed ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision in shallow spits of *c*10cm. The trench was excavated to the level of the natural sub-soil or the exposure of early post-medieval/medieval or earlier deposits, at which point hand-excavation was undertaken.

Excavation conformed to the requirements of the Leicestershire County Council (LCC 2007) written brief and an accompanying Written Scheme of Excavation..

The trenches were cleaned by hand and the archaeological deposits were fully recorded by written, drawn and photographic records. Sections and plans were drawn at appropriate scales and levelled to Ordnance Datum. Environmentally distinctive deposits with potential to address palaeo-environmental issues were sampled. The location of the trenches was accurately surveyed and related to the Ordnance Survey grid and Ordnance Datum by hand-measured survey.

4 THE TRIAL TRENCHING RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1

Natural

In Trench 1 the natural geology was comprised of fine, soft red/orange/yellow glacio-fluvial sand.

Ditch [103]

Linear ditch [103] lay at the south end of the trench aligned east-west and had a steep southern sloping side on to a broad flat base, 1.6m wide and 0.76m deep (Figs 2 and 3, section 1, Plate 3) The north side of the ditch was largely truncated by a recent brick-lined well/construction pit [110]/[111] and a modern pit [108].

The ditch fills (104) to (106) were firm to compact sandy clays. The orange brown primary fill (104) included a few small rounded pebbles and gravel. Overlying (104) was fill (105), a dark grey fill. The uppermost fill (106) was also darker, but sandier with the occasional charcoal fleck from which a single glazed 13th - to 14th -century medieval pottery sherd was recovered, although this may be residual. A few fragments of animal bones were also recovered from this fill.

Ditches [112], [114], [122] and [124]

These ditches located approximately up to 13m to the north of ditch [103], on a similar east-west alignment.

Ditch [114]

Ditch [114] was the earliest of this group of the ditches with V-shaped profile 0.86m deep and at least 1.35m wide (Figs 2 and 3, section 2, Plate 2). The ditch had two fills, a grey brown clay-sand primary deposit (115), with the occasional small gravel and charcoal fleck inclusion. Fill (115) was overlaid by a greyish/orange brown silty-sand (116), containing a few small gravel/pebbles. Neither fill contained any finds.

Ditch [112]

The south side of [114] was cut by a much larger ditch [112], up to 4.4m wide and 1.7m deep (Figs 2 and 3, section 2, Plate 1). The ditch was steep sided, but with a gentler slope on the upper part of the north side where it cut ditch [114]. The base was flat to slightly concave.

The ditch fills (117) to (121) and (127) were soft to firm and yellowish/orange to grey brown in colour, varying from silty to loamy, but predominately very sandy deposits. The inclusions were occasional small gravel/pebbles and charcoal flecks. No datable material was recovered.

Ditch [122]

This ditch appeared to be a re-cut of in-filled ditch [112], and had a broad U-shaped profile, 2m wide and 0.5m deep (Figs 2 and 3, section 2, Plate 1). It contained a single fill (123), dark yellowish brown slightly loamy sand, including a few small gravel/pebbles and charcoal flecks. No finds were present.

Ditch [124]

Similar to ditch [122], it also cut ditch [112], but on its northern edge. The ditch was a shallow broad U-shaped cut, with a gentler sloping north side, 1.45m wide and 0.25m deep (Figs 2 and 3, section 2, Plate 2). The single fill (125) was a firm, dark yellowish/grey sandy loam, containing a moderate number of large pebbles/cobbles, it included a fragmented animal bone, but no datable finds.

Buried soil

A possible buried soil (102) survived in a slight hollow, sealing ditches [112], [114], [122] and [124], (Fig 3, Section 4, Plates 2 and 3). The soil was an undisturbed, homogeneous dark yellowish brown very sandy loam, with the occasional small gravel/pebble and very occasional charcoal fleck. The layer spanned the width of the ditches and a little beyond the south side, with a depth of up to 0.36m. No finds were present.

Modern features

The other features in the trench were all recent in date and included a probable 19th/20th century brick lined well/construction pit [110]/[111] which contained 19th century pottery, a large pit [108] containing brick debris, another large pit (109) containing concrete waste and a service trench (Fig 2).

Modern overburden

The overburden comprised of a layer of recent demolition material (128), between 0.04 to 0.31m deep, overlying a tarmac surface 0.04m to 0.6m thick, which in turn lay on a levelling/make-up layer (126), containing brick, stone and other building debris, 0.25m to 0.37m deep. The make-up layer sealed the archaeology, or lay directly on to the natural.

4.2 Trench 2

Natural

The natural in trenches 2 and 3 was a light to mid orange sand/clay with gravel patches

Posthole [203]

Trench 2 contained only a single posthole [203] that was sub-circular in shape, up to 0.37m in diameter, with a U-shaped profile 0.18m deep (Figs 2 and 3, section 3). The fill (204) was dark grey sandy clay, with a moderate amount of gravel and charcoal inclusions. No finds were present.

4.3 Trench 3

Ditch [303]

The ditch had a gently sloping, slightly undulating west side onto a probable flattish base, with a width of at least 2.24m and a depth of 1.1m (Figs 2 and 3, section 3 Plate 4). The east side of the ditch was not excavated as it lay in the line of a modern service pipe.

The primary fill (304) was compact, dark yellowish brown sandy clay, including the occasional small gravel/pebble and charcoal fleck, but contained no finds. Fill (304) was overlaid by fill (305), dark grey brown sandy clay mixed with orange clay patches that included the occasional small gravel/pebble and charcoal fleck, from which a single sherd of 17th century post-medieval pottery and five sherds of residual early-middle Saxon handmade pottery were retrieved. The mixed material and finds possibly indicate deliberate infilling from stripping of the surrounding landscape.

Fill (306) overlay (305) and comprised mid orange brown gritty/gravelly sandy-clay, from which 17th century post-medieval pottery was recovered. This material may also have been a deliberate backfill deposit.

The uppermost fill (307) was dark grey brown sandy clay also containing 17th century post-medieval pottery and a fragment of clay tobacco pipe.

Animal bone was also recovered from fills (305), (306) and (307), and a few fragments of slag were also retrieved from fill (306).

Modern overburden

Material overlying Trenches 2 and 3 was similar to that in Trench 1, comprising a tarmac surface 0.07m to 0.15m thick, which overlaid a levelling/make-up layer (202)/(302) of brick, stone and other building debris, 0.25m to 0.44m in depth, (Fig 3, Section 4). The make-up layer sealed the archaeology, or lay directly on to the natural.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Iain Soden

The evaluation produced thirteen sherds of pottery, in six fabrics or generic types, the assemblage weighing 221g.

This is a small and very fragmentary assemblage, useful only as a guide to dating contexts. It implies that there has been some (but not intense) occupation nearby since the early-middle Saxon period, although most of the material pre-dating the early post-medieval was residual in later contexts. The pottery has been matched as far as possible to the published typology by Davies and Sawday in Connor and Buckley (2000, 166).

Table 1: Pottery types

Context	No/wt (g)	Type	Common name	Production range
106	1/3	NO	Nottingham type ware	1250-1350
111	1/125	EA	Post-med Earthenware (Pancheon)	1800-1900
305	1/29	EA2	Earthenware 2	1500-1750
305	3/34	SX	Saxon ware	c400-800
305	2/3	SN	St Neots type ware	c850-1100
306	2/13	MB	Midland Black	1650-1750
306	1/1	EA	Post-med Earthenware (Pancheon)	1800-1900
306	1/11	EA2	Earthenware 2	1500-1750
307	1/2	MB	Midland Black	1650-1750
	13/221			c400-1900

The early-middle Saxon sherds are hand-made, including an upright rim, and are tempered with poorly sorted quartz and granitic lumps. They are probably local to the nearby Charnwood Forest area.

The peak of activity on or near the site (or alternatively just rubbish dumping at the site) seems to be in the early post-medieval period, perhaps the later 17th or 18th century.

5.2 **Slag** by Andy Chapman

A single large fragment and two small pieces of ferrous metalworking debris, weighing 390g, was recovered from the fill (306) of ditch [303], which produced post-medieval pottery dated to the 17th century.

The large piece of slag is hearth lining, highly vesicular with a partly fluid upper surface and with small pieces of carbonised charcoal fuel embedded in the surface. This piece would appear to have come from a charcoal-fuelled smithing hearth.

5.3 **Animal bone** by Karen Deighton

During the course of excavation 385g of animal bone were collected from five medieval/post-medieval contexts.

Results

Fragmentation was heavy, with bones exhibiting old breaks. Unfortunately it was difficult to ascertain if these were the result of trampling, compaction in the soil or butchery. Surface condition was moderate with all bones showing evidence of surface abrasion. The surface of the bones was “powdery” to the touch. Evidence of canid gnawing was observed on bones from contexts 305 and 306, Ditch 303. No evidence of butchery was noted, although this could have been obscured by the high level of surface abrasion. No evidence of burning was noted.

Only ten bone fragments from four contexts could be assigned a taxonomic category, these were as follows three *Bos* (cattle), six *ovicaprid* (sheep/goat) and one large ungulate (large hooved animal). No identifiable material was observed in context 125.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, due to the small amount of material recovered and its poor condition, little can be said of the animal economy of the site or the genesis of the assemblage (ie kitchen waste, primary butchery). However, it can be stated that at least two species of common domesticate (cattle and sheep/goat) were exploited at the site.

6 CONCLUSION

The ditches appear to constitute the only significant archaeology, with ditches in Trench 1 all aligned east-west and the single ditch in Trench 3 aligned north-south, which respectively place them square to Windsor Street and King Street. The ditches therefore probably represent the boundaries of former building plots or similar enclosures, with their frontages facing on to the aforementioned streets.

It is possible up to four plots may be represented on the site. One plot was probably represented by the area between the east-west ditches [103] and [114] up to 13m wide. A similar area was formed to the south of ditch [103] and the existing neighbouring boundary wall. Both these plots would have lain parallel, fronting on to Windsor Street. Similarly ditch [303] may have formed a plot boundary with the neighbouring boundary wall on the north side of the site, which would have fronted on to King Street.

The lengths of these plots were probably approximately 30m long, which is equivalent to 1.5 chains or 6 poles. The width of 12-13m would represent approximately 1.5 poles.

The plot at the junction of Windsor Street and King Street would have been sub-square in shape, with equidistant frontages of around 15m and rear boundaries of 20m, which were 3 poles and 4 poles (1 chain) respectively.

Although only one ditch was probably of post-medieval date, with the others undated, except for one piece of medieval pottery that may be residual, they are most likely to be of similar origin.

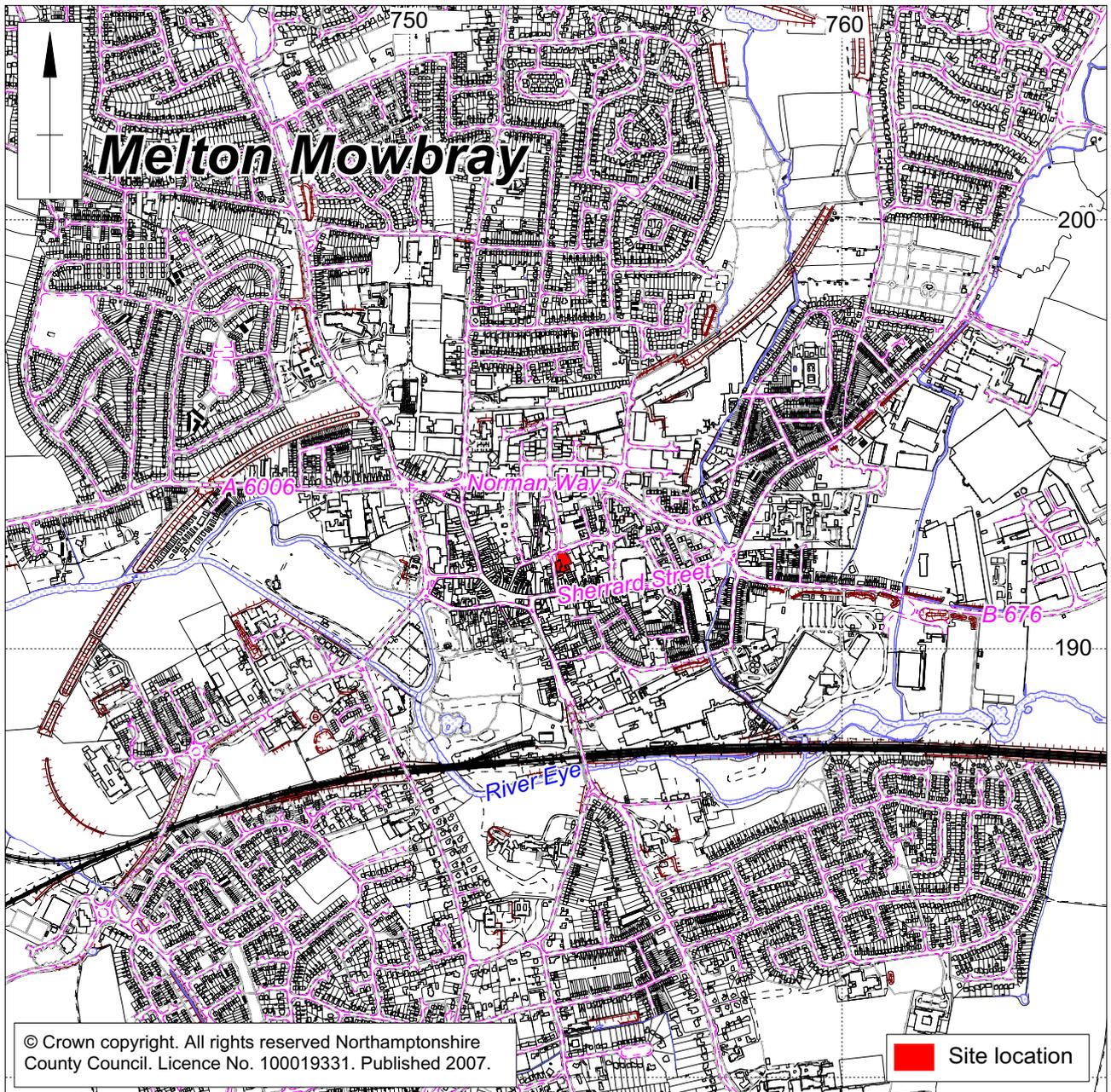
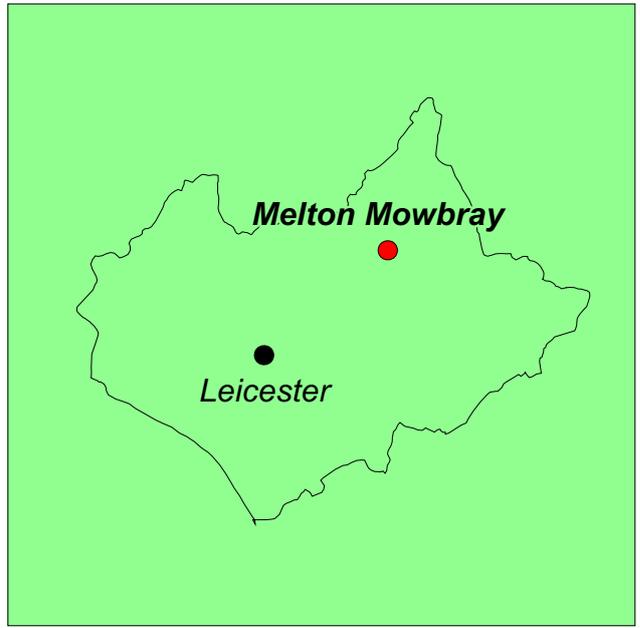
The lack of finds and other features, apart from the single posthole, with minimal evidence of buried soils or other deposits existing across most of the trenches, would suggest that the landscape has been cleared and levelled, removing all but the deepest deposits and features. The possible backfill deposits of the north-south ditch [303] may be just such an indication of levelling and clearance.

The presence of the brick-lined well may be evidence of later occupation in a plot having a frontage on Windsor Street.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

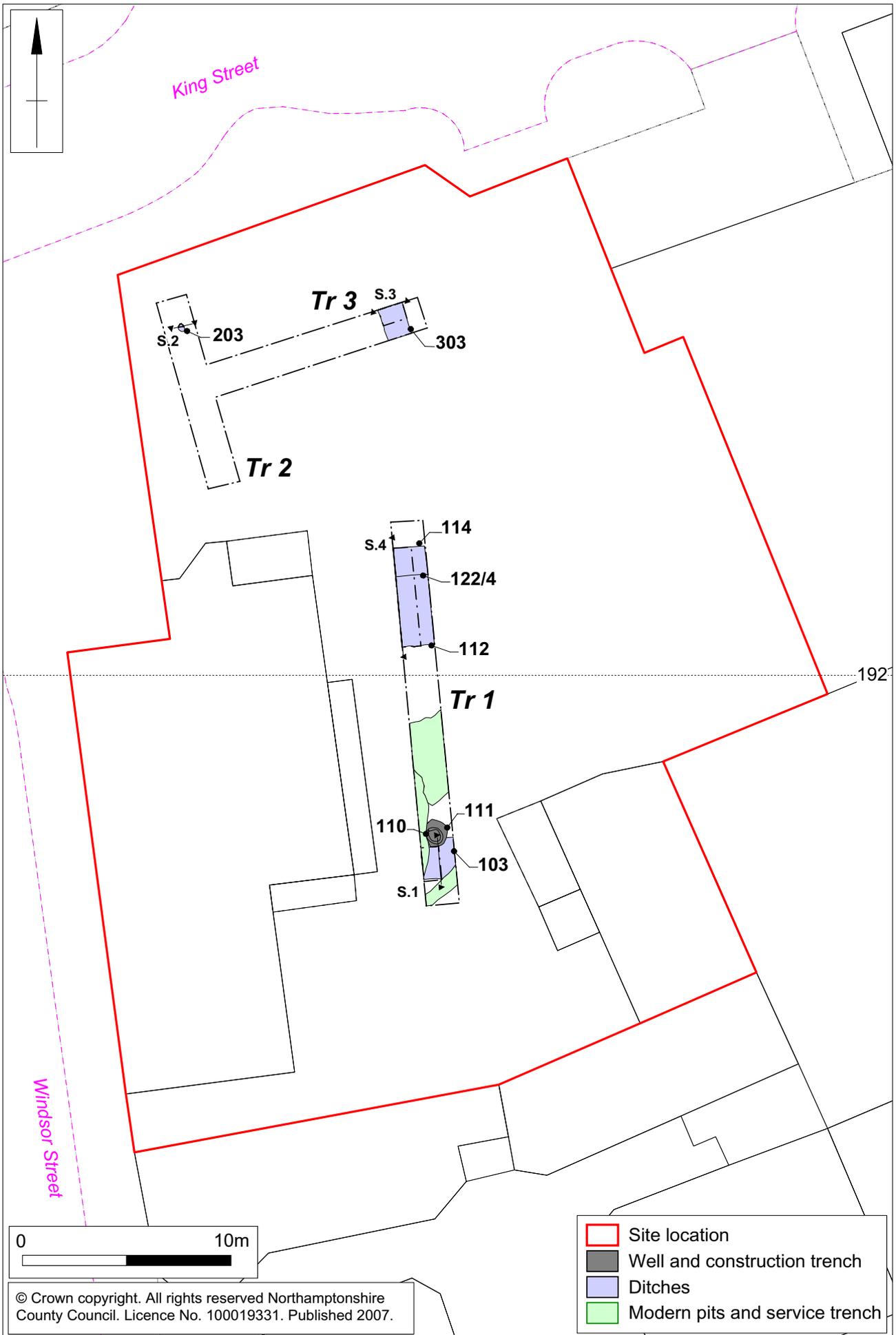
LCC 2007 *Brief for archaeological evaluation of land at Windsor House, Windsor Street, Melton Mowbray* Historic and Natural Environment Team, Environment and Heritage Services, Leicestershire County Council, 2007

Davies, S, and Sawday, D, 2000 The medieval and later pottery, in A Connor and R Buckley 2000 *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*, Leicester Archaeology Monographs **5**, 165ff



Scale 1:15,000

Site location Fig 1



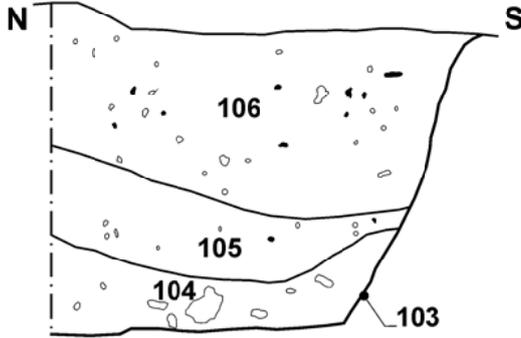
Scale 1:250

Trench plan Fig 2

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Section 1 - Trench 1

75.81mOD



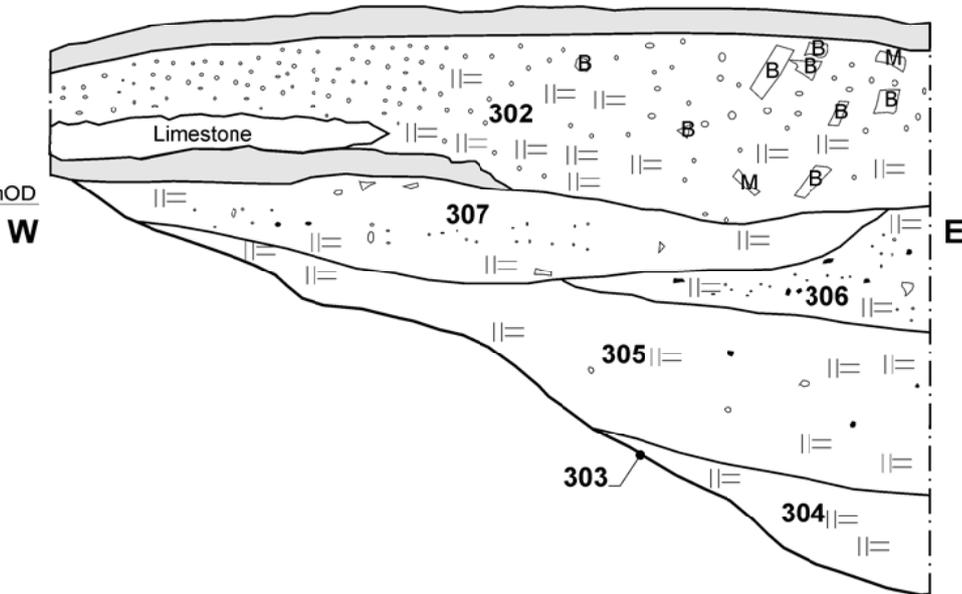
Section 2 - Trench 3

76.22mOD



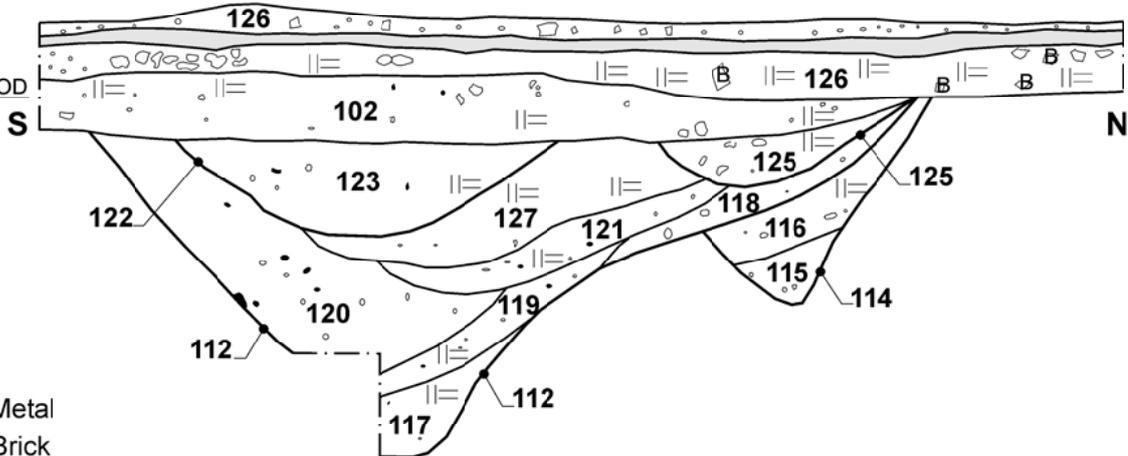
Section 3 - Trench 2

76.29mOD



Section 4 - Trench 1

75.99mOD



-  Metal
-  Brick
-  Tarmac
-  Clay
-  Charcoal



Sections 1-4 Fig 3



Plate 1: Ditches 112 and 122, facing west.



Plate 2: Ditches 114 and 124, facing west.



Plate 3: Ditch 103, facing east.



Plate 4: Ditch 303, facing north.