

Summary

A programme of archaeological trial trenching was undertaken on land off Portland Street, Mansfield Woodhouse (centred on NGR; SK 54320 63414).

The site is located within the historic core of the medieval village of Mansfield Woodhouse.

Five trenches were opened, though one had to be split in two due to the presence of a standing wall. Four trenches contained boundary walls that still survive as earthworks. One contained two small pits and another contained a large linear feature and a single human grave.

Made ground was present in Trench 4A and Trench 3. Overall it is concluded that the archaeological potential of the site is not high.

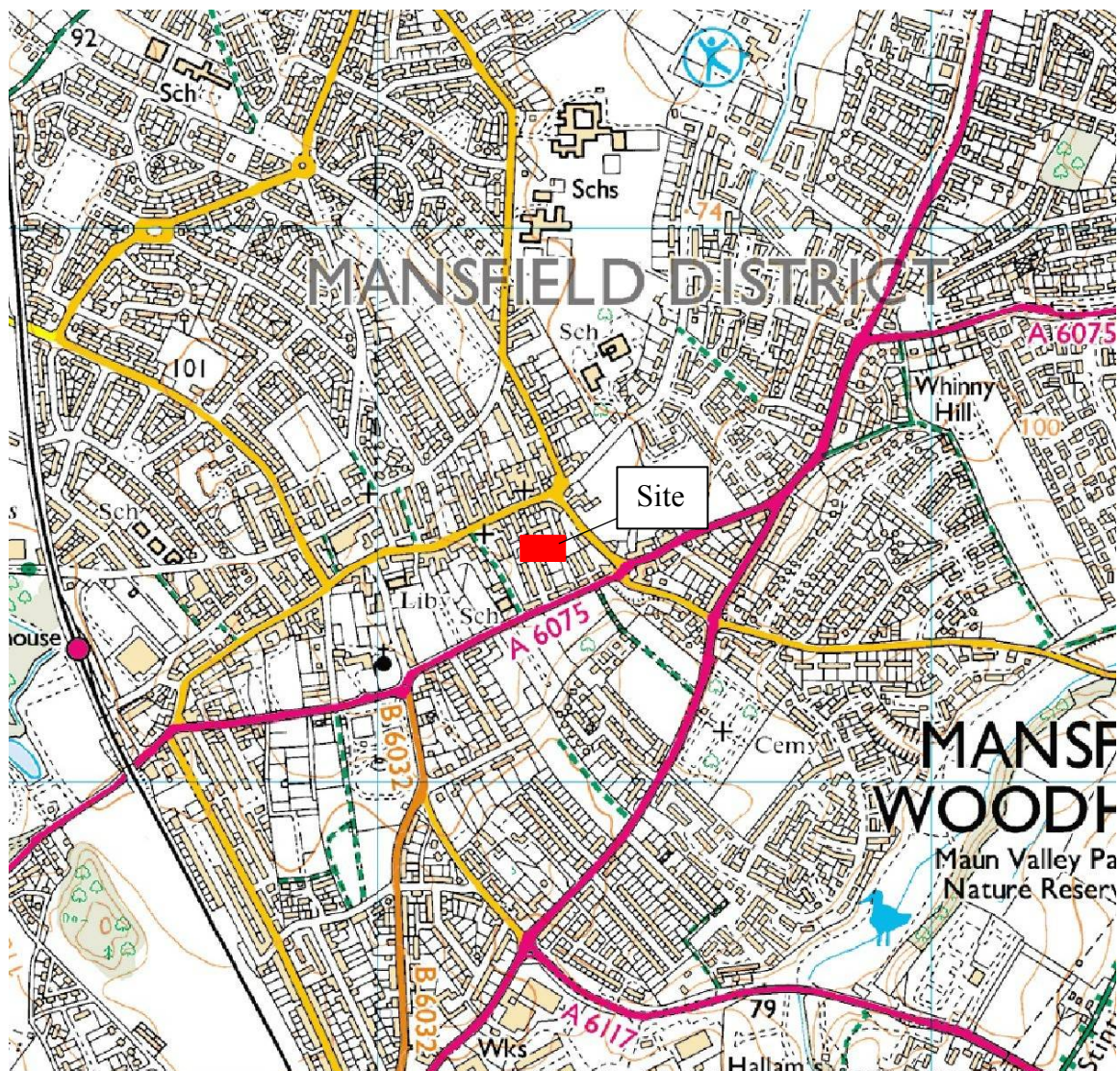


Figure 1 Site location plan (Scale 1:25,000)

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Rippon Homes to undertake a programme of archaeological investigation on land off Portland Street, Mansfield Woodhouse (centred on NGR; SK 54320 63414) to assess the archaeological potential of the site to inform a planning application (Ref. 2007/1125/NT).

This work was carried out in accordance with a Specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) (PCA Lincoln 2008), which was submitted to and approved by the Planning Archaeologist for Nottinghamshire County Council prior to the commencement of the on-site works. The specification follows the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, (DoE 1990), *Management of Archaeological Projects* (EH 1991), and *Standards and guidance for archaeological evaluations*, (IFA 1999).

Copies of this report will be deposited with the client, the Planning Archaeologist of Nottinghamshire County Council, the Nottinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record, and the Local Planning Authority. A short text will be submitted to the editor of the county journal, *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*; and this will feature as a short note in due course. Reports will also be deposited at the Mansfield Museum, accompanied with an ordered project archive.

2.0 Site Location and Description (Figs. 1 and 2)

Mansfield Woodhouse lies approximately 20km north of Nottingham and less than 2km to the north-east of the centre of Mansfield. The site lies close to the centre of Mansfield Woodhouse.

It comprises of an amorphous unit of waste land approximately 0.8ha in size, currently disused and sparsely covered with trees and brambles, though there is evidence of hard standing in some areas.

The only standing building on site is a semi-derelict outbuilding. Two retaining walls run north-west to south-east across site while a third boundary wall running parallel with these runs from the stable block to the edge of site.

The site is bounded to the north-west, south-west and south-east by walls and fences of residential properties while the north-eastern boundary is occupied by a small car park and Portland Street.

The site lies at approximately 80m AOD on the south-western end and steps down at each retaining wall to approximately 79m AOD at the north-eastern end. The underlying solid geology is Lower Magnesian Limestone of the Permo-Triassic (BGS 1971).

3.0 Planning Background

Planning permission is being sought for the redevelopment of the site (Ref. 2007/1125/NT) and it was recommended by Dr. C. Robinson of Nottinghamshire

County Council that a programme of archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to inform any planning decision.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The evidence for prehistoric activity in the area is limited; a flint knife was found to the north-east of Mansfield Woodhouse in the 1960s and early Ordnance Survey maps of the area show an earthwork identified as a possible Iron Age Hill fort, now built over, at Winny Hill, off Leeming Lane North in the east of Mansfield Woodhouse (Stevenson 1906).

The number of Roman coins found at Mansfield has led to the suggestion that there may have been a Roman settlement here. A number of Roman roads cross Nottinghamshire, including Fosseyway and Ermine Street (Brown 1891).

A branch off Ermine Street, Till Bridge Lane, passes north of Mansfield and North Road, now Mansfield Road, which ran from Nottingham to York, also passes close by.

In 1789 a large Roman villa complex was discovered approximately 1½ miles to the north-east of Mansfield Woodhouse. Two large buildings with painted plaster, mosaic floors and hypocausts as well as a cold bath were identified (*ibid.*).

The place name of Mansfield Woodhouse has a topographical origin relating to its position near Mansfield, deriving from the Old English *wudu* and *hūs* meaning ‘Woodland hamlet near Mansfield’ (Mills 1991).

There is no mention of Mansfield Woodhouse in the Domesday Book and the earliest reference is late 12th century. It is possible therefore that the village was established shortly after the Norman Conquest. The application area is located within the historic core of the village.

In 1304 Mansfield Woodhouse suffered a serious fire that destroyed much of the settlement and Church. Edward I gave permission for timber to be taken from the royal forest of Sherwood to rebuild the settlement and by 1327 the village seems to have outgrown the surrounding villages.

The present layout of Mansfield Woodhouse is typical of a medieval street plan with long plots stretched between the main street and a back lane (High Street and Park Road respectively).

The 1885 Ordnance Survey map shows buildings along the south-western edge of the site, accessed along a road following the route of one of the retaining walls still visible on site.

Buildings are also shown along the north-western area of the site and where derelict outbuildings now stand. The rest of the site is under gardens and an orchard.

The 1899 Ordnance Survey map shows the same layout with a row of terrace houses facing on to Portland Street.

The 1986 Ordnance Survey map shows that the row of terrace houses facing on to Portland Street no longer stood while the other buildings remained.

The 2000 Ordnance Survey map shows that all of the buildings except the outbuilding still on site had been removed by this date.

5.0 Methodology

The overburden was removed by JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.60m wide toothless grading bucket until the first archaeologically significant horizon or natural geology was exposed.

All archaeological features were then hand excavated and recorded. A sample section of each trench was recorded, as were sections of archaeological features. A photographic record, both colour and monochrome, was kept throughout the project.

6.0 Results

6.1 Trench 1 (Fig 3)

The natural geology (102) was encountered at 0.33m Below Present Ground Level (BPGL). This was sealed by subsoil (101); cutting the subsoil were two walls (103) and (104).

The foundation of wall (103) was a course of large roughly hewn limestone blocks with a course of smaller limestone blocks acting as a levelling layer upon which a limestone wall with pale grey mortar was built. Tile and pottery fragments recovered from within the wall date to the 19th century.

Wall (104) butted wall (103) and was constructed from small roughly hewn limestone blocks with a pale grey mortar. Tile fragments recovered from within the wall date to 19th-20th century.

Both walls were sealed by topsoil (100) and were probably associated with the post-medieval building shown on maps dating between 1885 and 1995.

6.2 Trench 2 (Fig 4)

The natural geology (202) was encountered at 0.49m BPGL. This was sealed by subsoil (201), which was cut by the construction cut for wall (203). In turn, wall (203) was sealed by topsoil (200).

Wall (203) was constructed from small roughly hewn limestone blocks with pale grey mortar and was probably associated with the post-medieval building shown on maps dating between 1885 and 1989.

6.3 *Trench 3 (Fig 5)*

The natural geology (310) was encountered at 1m BPGL. Cut into this was wall foundation (308). Only a single course of large roughly hewn limestone blocks remained. It was possibly part of a former boundary wall.

Sealing the natural geology (310) was a mortar rich demolition deposit (309), from which 19th century tile was recovered. Wall (308) and deposit (309) were sealed by redeposited natural make-up deposit (307). Deposit (307) had a single posthole [306] cut into it.

A substantial levelling deposit (304) sealed deposit (307) at the north-eastern edge of the trench and the natural geology (310) at the south-eastern end.

A possible demolition deposit (303) sealed levelling layer (304) from which pottery and tile fragments dating to the 19th century were recovered. This was cut by wall (301) which was only visible in the south-eastern section.

Wall (301) was constructed of moderate sized roughly hewn limestone blocks bonded with a pale pink mortar. It butted against wall (302), which was also of roughly hewn limestone blocks set in pale grey mortar.

Sealing both of these walls was topsoil deposit (300).

Walls (301) and (302) were probably associated with the buildings shown on maps dating between 1879 and 1955.

6.4 *Trench 4A (Fig 6)*

Trench 4 was spilt into two sections (A and B) to prevent destabilising a standing wall (see Fig. 2).

Trench 4A was not excavated to natural geology along its entire length due to the presence of services.

Trench 4B was extended to the north-west and south-east to help establish if human remains were likely to be encountered (see below).

The natural geology (405) was encountered at 1.20m BPGL. This was sealed by subsoil (404) which in turn was sealed by buried topsoil (403).

In the north-eastern end of the trench a foul water pipe and soak-away were encountered; probably associated with the buildings that faced Portland Street, but it was considered safer to leave them untouched in case the foul water pipe was live.

These were sealed by made ground/ levelling deposit (402), which was sealed by two phases of demolition/ made ground deposits (401) and (400).

6.5 Trench 4B (Fig 7)

The natural geology (452) was encountered at 0.80m BPGL. This was cut by three features; ditch [459], posthole [454] and grave [457]. All of these features were sealed by subsoil (452), which in turn was sealed by topsoil (450).

Ditch [459] was 1m wide and 0.50m in depth. It was square in section, with vertical sides and horizontal base, reminiscent of a leat. The natural geology is difficult to excavate into this profile which suggests that this profile was in some way functional.

Posthole [454] was oval in plan with steeply sloped sides and concave base. It was cut by grave cut [457]. This was a shallow grave with only a small amount of human bone remaining. The remains were fully excavated and removed at a later date, where separate report has been undertaken (PCA 2008).

6.6 Trench 5 (Fig 8)

The natural geology (510) was encountered at 0.60m BPGL. This was cut by two postholes and two pits. These features were sealed by subsoil (509) which in turn was sealed by topsoil (508).

Postholes [505] and [507] were similar in plan and section with steep sides and concave bases. Both had late post-medieval (mid 19th-20th century) pottery in them and they are likely to form part of a fence line.

Pit [501] was oval in plan with steeply sloped sides and concave base. Cutting this was pit [503] which contained a dog burial. No pottery was recovered from the fill, but as the pit was sealed by subsoil (509) it probably dates from the post-medieval rather than modern period.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

7.1 Discussion

The majority of activity identified by the evaluation can be attributed to post-medieval buildings as identified on historic mapping. The remaining archaeological features, including two pits, a large ditch and a human grave all remain undated.

The possibility that the grave identified in Trench 4B may form part of a non-conformist burial ground, due to the strong non-conformist history of the area, was suggested by Dr. Robinson, the Assistant Archaeological Officer for NCC, during a site visit.

Non-conformist burial grounds are usually strictly laid out in neat rows, with little inter-cutting of graves. With this in mind, the archaeological trench was extended to the north-west and to the south-east to establish the presence/absence of further possible burials (Fig 2 and 7). Though it remains a possibility that the single grave is on the edge of a group of burials, the absence of any in the immediate vicinity reduces the likelihood of a cemetery.

There is also no evidence from historical maps that a burial ground was on this site, when other burial grounds in Mansfield Woodhouse are clearly marked. The grave encountered therefore is more probably than not an isolated example of uncertain date.

The large linear feature identified in Trench 4B is of note as its purpose and extent are not yet fully understood. The possibility of this being a mill leat is small. The nearest river is approximately 1km away and the only evidence for the presence of a mill in the area is road names; New Mill Lane which runs from Welbeck Road to Leeming Lane and this is more likely to refer to the Windmill shown on the 1887 map.

7.2 Conclusion

The evaluation has identified foundations for post-medieval buildings that were known to have stood on site and has established that these foundations did not cut into the natural geology.

The depth and preservation of the human remains identified in Trench 4b indicate that, though undated, they are likely to be earlier than the post-medieval period.

8.0 Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are expressed to the commissioning body Rippon Homes. Thanks are also expressed to Nottinghamshire Police and SOCO who visited the site.

9.0 Bibliography

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APPENDIX 1 Colour Plate



Trench 1, showing post-medieval walls, looking south-west



Trench 5 showing pits and post-holes, looking south-west



Skeleton 455 in Trench 4B



Linear 459 in Trench 4B, looking south-west

APPENDIX 2 Context List

Trench 1	
Context	Description
100	Topsoil; mid black brown silty clay with rare small angular stones. 0.10m in depth
101	Subsoil; mid orange brown clay silt, occasional charcoal flecking. 0.23m in depth
102	Natural; mid yellow orange limestone
103	Wall foundation; moderate sized roughly hewn limestone blocks with pale grey mortar. Irregular coursing.
104	Wall foundation; moderate sized roughly hewn limestone blocks with pale grey mortar. Irregular coursing

Trench 2	
Context	Description
200	Topsoil; mid black brown silty clay with rare small angular stones. 0.24m in depth
201	Subsoil; mid orange brown clay silt, occasional charcoal flecking. 0.25m in depth
202	Natural; mid yellow orange limestone
203	Wall foundation; small sized roughly hewn limestone blocks with pale grey mortar. Irregular coursing.

Trench 3	
Context	Description
300	Topsoil; mid black brown silty clay with rare small angular stones. 0.30m in depth
301	Wall foundation; small to moderate sized roughly hewn limestone blocks with pale pink mortar. Irregular coursing.
302	Wall foundation; small sized roughly hewn limestone blocks with white mortar. Irregular coursing.
303	Demolition/levelling deposit; dark red brown silty clay with frequent brick rubble, CBM and stone. 0.30m in depth
304	Make-up/levelling deposit; dark red brown silty clay with frequent charcoal flecking. 0.50m in depth
305	Primary fill of post-hole/small pit; dark black brown silty clay. 0.35m in depth
306	Cut of post-hole/small pit; steep sided with concave base. 0.25m in width, 0.35m in depth
307	Make-up/dump deposit; redeposited natural clay with very frequent charcoal flecking. 0.30m in depth
308	Wall foundation; large sized roughly hewn limestone blocks, only one course remaining.
309	Demolition deposit; light grey brown silty clay with very frequent CBM. 0.10m in depth
310	Natural; mid yellow orange limestone

Trench 4A	
Context	Description
400	Make-up deposit; dark black brown with frequent CBM and rubble. 0.20m in depth
401	Make-up deposit; dark black brown with frequent CBM and gravel. 0.12m in depth
402	Make-up deposit; mid orange brown sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecking. 0.40m in depth
403	Buried Topsoil; mid black brown silty clay with rare small angular stones. 0.40m in depth
404	Buried Subsoil; mid orange brown clay silt, occasional charcoal flecking. 0.30m in depth
405	Natural; mid yellow orange limestone

Trench 4B	
Context	Description
450	Topsoil; mid black brown silty clay with rare small angular stones. 0.30m in depth
451	Subsoil; mid orange brown clay silt, occasional charcoal flecking. 0.50m in depth
452	Natural; mid yellow orange limestone
453	Primary fill of pit; mid red brown silty clay. 0.15m in depth
454	Cut of pit; moderate to steep sided with concave base. 0.30m in width, 0.15m in depth
455	Skeleton; 10 vertebra, sacrum, 4 right metacarpals, 5 right phalanges, left and right ishium. No evidence for further remains though the grave cut appeared to be full size.
456	Fill of grave; dark red brown silty clay, no inclusion, root activity. 0.06m in depth
457	Cut of grave; moderate sided with flat base. 0.50m in width, 1.90m in length, 0.06m in depth
458	Primary fill of linear; dark red brown silty clay with frequent limestone fragments. 0.46m in depth
459	Cut of linear; vertical sides with horizontal base. 1.10m in width, 0.46m in depth

Trench 5	
Context	Description
500	Primary fill of pit; dark brown black clay silt. 0.33m in depth
501	Cut of pit; steep side with concave base. 1.40m in length, 0.70m in width, 0.33m in depth
502	Primary fill of pit; mid orange brown clay silt. 0.16m in depth
503	Cut of pit; steep side with concave base. 0.70m in diameter, 0.16m in depth
504	Primary fill of post-hole; dark black brown clay silt. 0.05m in depth
505	Cut of post-hole; steep side with concave base. 0.20m in diameter, 0.05m in depth
506	Primary fill of post-hole; dark black brown clay silt. 0.05m in depth
507	Cut of post-hole; steep side with concave base. 0.20m in diameter, 0.05m in depth
508	Topsoil; mid black brown silty clay with rare small angular stones. 0.30m in depth
509	Subsoil; mid orange brown clay silt, occasional charcoal flecking. 0.27m in depth
510	Natural; mid yellow orange limestone