JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

# AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

# OF THE

# LAND EAST OF NORTHAMPTON ROAD, MARKET HARBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE

**SP 7421 8623**

***On behalf of***

***Boden Group***

**SEPTEMBER 2006**

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| **REPORT FOR** | Boden Group<br>The Corn Exchange<br>47 High Street<br>Thrapston<br>Northants<br>NN17 5JG |
| **PREPARED BY** | David Gilbert |
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## FIGURES

***Summary***

*An evaluation of this site was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services from 25th – 26th July 2006. Fourteen trenches were excavated, totalling 420 metres in length, to reveal the underlying geology. Subsequently a watching brief was conducted from 4th - 10th August 2006.*

*The remains of the ridge and furrow in the area were sampled. Surviving below this were several pits and two ditches that were undated, but may be Neolithic.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Site Location *(Figure 1)*

The site is located 1.2km south-west of Market Harborough, in the parish of Market Harborough (formerly Little Bowden), in the District of Harborough, Leicestershire. It is centred on NGR SP74218623.

The northern and eastern edges of the site occupy an area of sand and gravel drift comprising the first gravel terrace of the River Jordan. These deposits overlie solid mudstone of the Blue Lias & Charmouth Mudstone Formations (Geological Survey of England & Wales, Market Harborough, Sheet 170).

## 1.2 Planning Background

Harborough District Council granted planning permission for the formation of a surface water detention basin on land east of Northampton Road, Market Harborough. A condition of the consent required for a programme of archaeological work. Following a desk-based assessment of the site undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services (2006) the Senior Planning Archaeologist (SPA) for Leicestershire County Council advised that further stages of archaeological investigation should be carried out. Initially a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching was undertaken to assess the location, extent, significance and character of any buried archaeological remains. This was followed by a targeted watching brief.

The site comprised an approximately triangular 'dry detention basin' located to the north of the development site, c. 1.5-3.5m in depth, and approximately 0.6 hectares in extent. It is proposed to dispose of the derived subsoil to the south of the basin by stripping topsoil from a 2.7 hectare area, depositing the subsoil and then re-covering with topsoil. In addition to the earthworks, service infrastructure will comprise a sewer running N-S at the western edge of the basin and linking the culvert to the basin.

The Senior Planning Archaeologist of Leicestershire County Council prepared a *Brief* for such an evaluation and watching brief and two *Written Schemes of Investigations* were subsequently prepared in response to these documents, which outlined a method that would satisfy the requirements of the briefs. The fieldwork was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services.

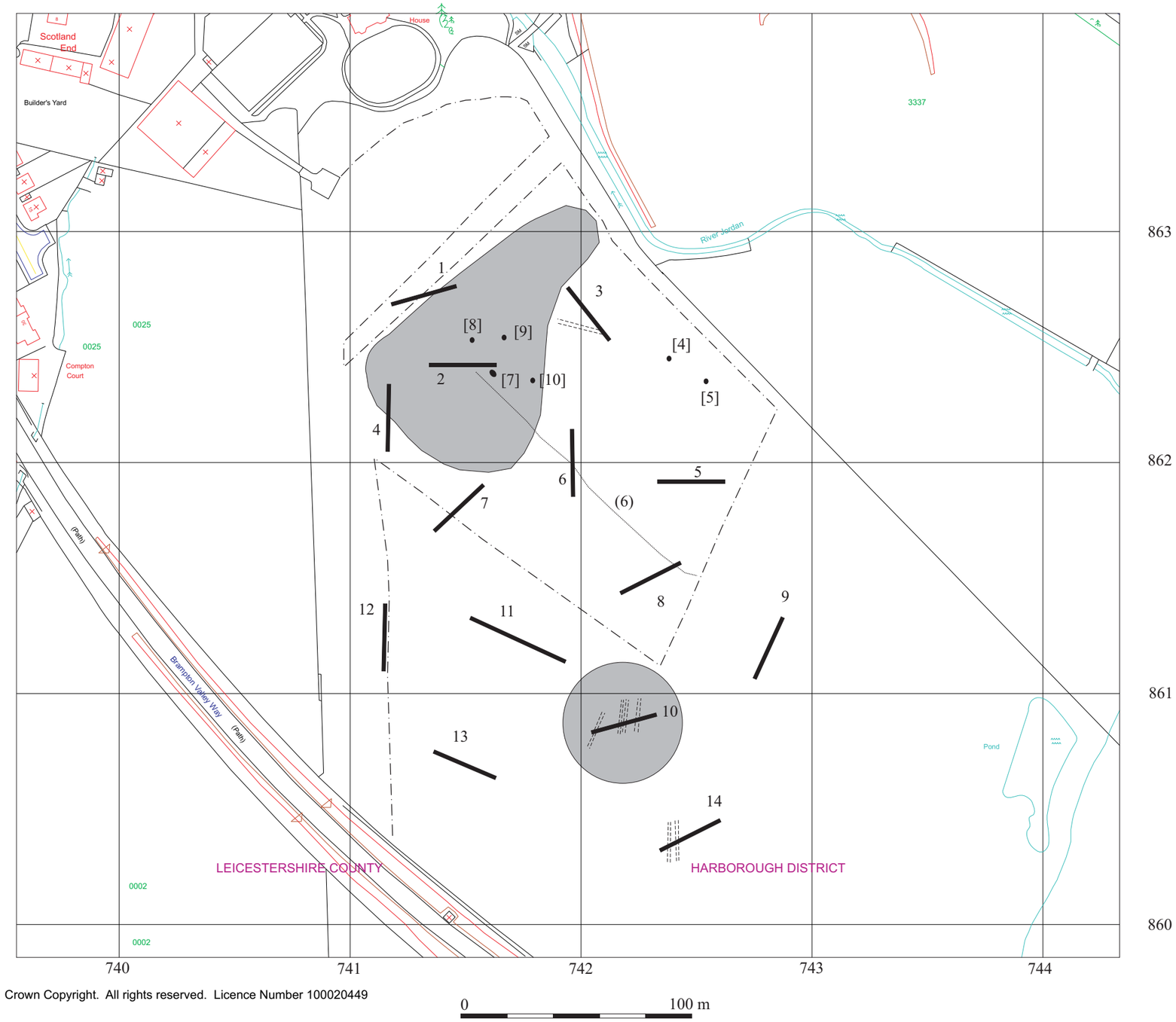


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Figure 1. Site Location

### 1.3 Archaeological Background

An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services (2006). This showed that the site has limited potential to contain buried archaeological remains. The lack of recorded archaeological sites within the development area and its immediate vicinity, may be due to a limited scope and coverage of previous archaeological fieldwork. The report underlines the topographical and geological potential of the area, suggesting they may have been conducive to prehistoric and latter phases of settlement due to its proximity to the watercourses of the area.

Assessment of available aerial photographs undertaken for the DBA suggested the presence of a possible linear feature to the west of the proposed basin (JMHS 2006, p14-5, Fig 6 & 7). Both prehistoric and medieval dates and origins for the feature have been suggested, but aerial photographs (HSL UK 69 9119, Run 8 Frame 0308) held by LCC dismiss the theory that it is a possible headland within the open field system. The DBA also highlighted the sequence of enclosed fields overlying the medieval common fields and the strip field system. Aerial photographs also indicate the possible presence of a several linear features across the site. It is likely that these correspond to the later fields depicted on the Enclosure Valuation and Strip Map of 1780.

## 2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

The aims of the watching brief were:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the area of the detention basin.
- To determine if remains located during the evaluation continued into the area of the basin.

## 3 STRATEGY

### 3.1 Research Design

In response to two briefs issued by the Historic and Natural Environment Team (HNET) of Leicestershire County Council a scheme of investigation was designed by

JMHS and agreed with the HNET's Senior Planning Archaeologist and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of a total of fourteen trenches across the site followed by a watching brief of targeted areas (Fig. 1, the shaded areas).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

### 3.2 Methodology

The trenching sample of 420.0 x 1.70m amounts to just over 2% of the area. This was achieved through the excavation of fourteen 30.0m long trenches (Fig. 1).

All trenches were 1.7 m wide and were excavated by a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological deposits.

The watch brief was to be conducted within the area of the detention basin, during soil stripping down to the natural and also in an area focused on Evaluation Trench 10 (Fig. 1, the shaded areas). However, the entire area of the soil strip was monitored due to the stripping strategy employed.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced.

## 4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

The topsoil (1/01), (2/01), (3/01), (4/01), (5/01), (6/01), (7/01), (8/01), (9/01), (10/01), (11/01), (12/01), (13/01) and (14/01) was uniform across the site being a friable brown sandy loam with approximately 20% small stones. The thickness of this deposit varied from about 0.25m to 0.34m.

The topsoil lay directly above a subsoil (1/02), (2/02), (3/02), (4/02), (5/02), (6/02), (7/02), (8/02), (9/02), (10/02), (11/02), (12/02), (13/02) and (14/02) of orange-brown silty-clay with the occasional small stone. This subsoil varied between 0.1m and 0.25m in thickness. All trenches showed notable modern plough marks cut from the topsoil into the subsoil; these marks were aligned approximately east to west. In some trenches these marks penetrated to the natural.

The natural (1/03), (2/03), (3/03), (4/03), (5/03), (6/03), (7/03), (8/03), (9/03), (10/03), (11/03), (12/04), (13/03) and (14/03) in the area was a compact orange-brown sandy clay with approximately 10% small stones. This deposit was recorded to a depth of 1.5m in the north of the field where a pipe was being laid, under it was dark blue-grey silty clay.

In Trench 11 this natural (11/03) was mottled with blue-grey clay. In Trench 12 there were patches of yellow-grey sandy clay and gravel (12/03) overlying the orange clay (12/03). Trench 4 revealed an underlying layer of orange-brown silt mixed with at least 60% gravel (4/04). This deposit was seen to rise towards the south of the trench where (4/03) petered out.

Trenches 2 and 7 located a number of land drains, 3" drains feeding into 4" ones. Two trenches 11 and 13 had some evidence for ridge and furrow marking the natural. Only four trenches recorded any sub-soil features, other than land drains.

Trench 3 *(Figure 2)*

Within this trench was a linear ditch with a rounded terminal [3/04]. It was at least 2.2m in length, 0.9m wide and 0.4m deep. The sides were near vertical and the base sloped down towards the south. The primary fill (3/06) was a firm orange-brown sandy clay with an occasional stone. The secondary fill was an orange sandy clay mottled with blue-grey clay flecked with charcoal (3/05). The profile of (3/05) in section was U-shaped, possibly indicating that the ditch had been re-cut at a later date.

Trench 5

A linear cut [5/04] was observed running north-east to south-west at the western end of Trench 5. It was at least 1.5m long, 0.6m wide and over 1.4m deep. It was cut through (5/02) and into (5/03). The sides were vertical, but although it was sampled to a depth of 1.4m the base was not reached. The lower fill was a mid orange brown silty-sandy clay (5/06) that was at least 0.8m thick. The upper fill was a mottled orange brown sandy clay flecked with charcoal (5/05) that was 0.5m thick. Above this and also resting on the subsoil (5/02) was a deposit of firm orange-brown silty clay 0.1m thick. This is likely to be part of the back-filling material of the cut that has been displaced by ploughing. It was thought to be a geo-technical pit by Dennis Wilkinson of Boden Group.

Trench 10 (*Figure 2*)

At the eastern end of the trench were located a pair of opposing ditch terminals 1m apart, cut into the natural. The northerly one [10/04] was 0.6m wide and 0.32m deep. It was U-shaped in profile. The lowest fill (10/07) was a greenish blue-grey sandy clay 0.15m thick. Above this was a compact light orange-brown sandy silt (10/06) that was 0.18m thick. There was some evidence for the re-cutting of this ditch, a tertiary fill (10/05) had a U-shaped profile in section. This fill (10/05) was an orange-brown sandy silt.

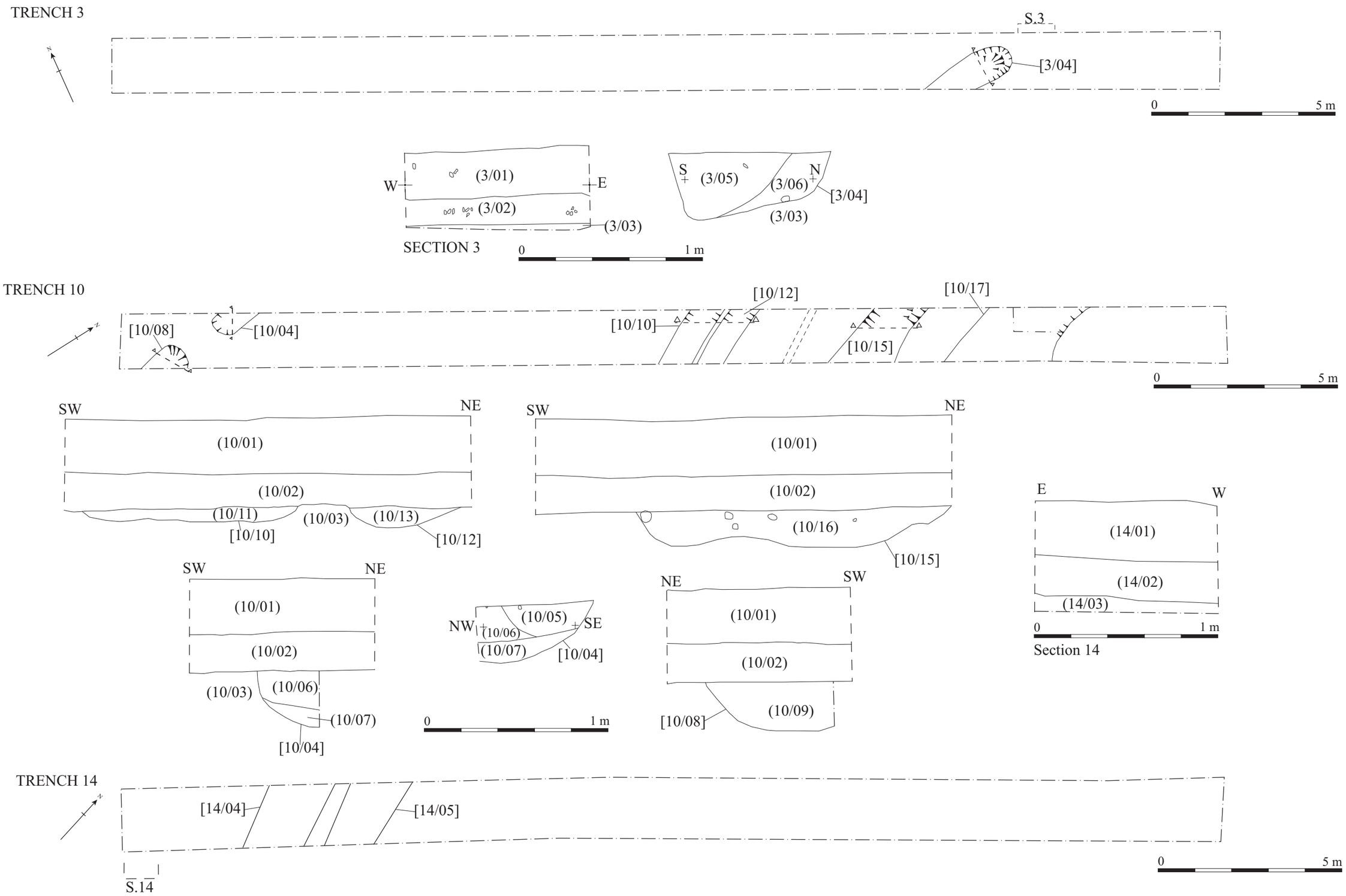


Figure 2. Plans and Sections of Trenches 3, 10 and 14

The opposing ditch terminal [10/08] was 0.9m wide and 0.22m deep. It was a shallow U-shape in profile. It was filled with an orange-brown sandy clay flecked with charcoal (10/09). There was no evidence for re-cutting of this feature although any re-cut could have been outside the limits of the trench.

Towards the centre of the trench were a series of four parallel ditches aligned north-east to south-west, located in two pairs. The first [10/10] was 1m wide and 0.2m deep with steep sides and a flat base. It was filled with an orange-brown sandy clay (10/11) flecked with charcoal. Next to it was a shallow U-shaped ditch [10/12] that was 0.8m wide and 0.16m deep. It was filled with an orange-brown sandy clay (10/13) flecked with charcoal.

Separating these two ditches from the other two was an ephemeral linear deposit (10/14) of very dark brown silty clay 0.25m wide. This possibly represents a fence line between the two sets of ditches.

The next ditch [11/15] was 1.1m wide and 0.25m deep, with rounded sides and an uneven base, it was filled with an orange-brown sandy clay (10/16) flecked with charcoal. The last ditch [10/17] was 2m wide and 0.17m deep. It was filled with an orange-brown sandy clay (10/18) flecked with charcoal and containing some large stones.

Trench 14

Two parallel linear ditches were recorded in the western end of the trench. Both extended the full width of the trench. The first [14/04] was 1.6m wide and the other [14/05] was 1.4m wide. Both were filled with a similar orange-brown silty clay deposit flecked with charcoal and both were unexcavated. The position indicated it was a continuation of the field boundary located in Trench 10 (Fig. 4) and the fills of both were similar to those in Trench 10.

## The Watching Brief Area

Although the brief only specified the area to be monitored was the detention basin and a 25m radius of Trench 10 the entire area of the soil strip was monitored due to the method of stripping. All trenches except Trench 13 were backfilled prior to stripping.

The topsoil was recorded as (1), the subsoil as (2) and natural as (3) within this area. Numerous land drains were noted, mostly running roughly north to south. Many were 3” pipes connecting to 4” main pipes.

Over the majority of the area the depth of strip was not sufficient to expose features cut into the natural. In patches in the north of the site the natural was uncovered and a pit [4] and a post-hole [5] were recorded (Fig. 1). The pit [4] was oval 2.5m by 1.8m in plan with near vertical sides. It was only sample excavated to a depth of 0.1m as the feature was to be preserved *in situ*. It was filled with a mid grey sandy clay with numerous charcoal flecks and some gravel. The post-hole [5] was sub-circular 0.3m by 0.2m in plan and 0.17m deep, with near vertical sides and a rounded base. It was filled with a dark grey silty clay.

A faint dark linear soil mark (6) within the subsoil (2) was observed running roughly east to west across the site. This could only be seen at a distance, closer inspection of the area revealed no change in the deposit.

Within the area of the detention basin four pits were recorded. The first [7] was rectangular 1.6m by 0.6m in plan filled with a blue-grey clay. It was confirmed as a geo-technical inspection pit by Dennis Wilkinson of Boden Group. The second was a flat based sub-circular pit [8] that measured 0.3m by 0.4m in plan and was 0.17m deep. It was filled with a grey sandy clay with large quantities of charcoal. The third was a circular pit [9] 0.28m in diameter and 0.1m deep with rounded sides and a flat base. It was filled with a grey sandy clay with large quantities of charcoal. The fourth pit [10] was also circular and was 0.33m in diameter, it was a V-shape in profile and 0.2m deep with a rounded base. It was also filled with a grey sandy clay with large quantities of charcoal.

Also noted in the area running east to west was a modern plastic water pipe, dated 1972, which used to feed a water trough in the field prior to 1980. This was in a cut 0.3m deep.

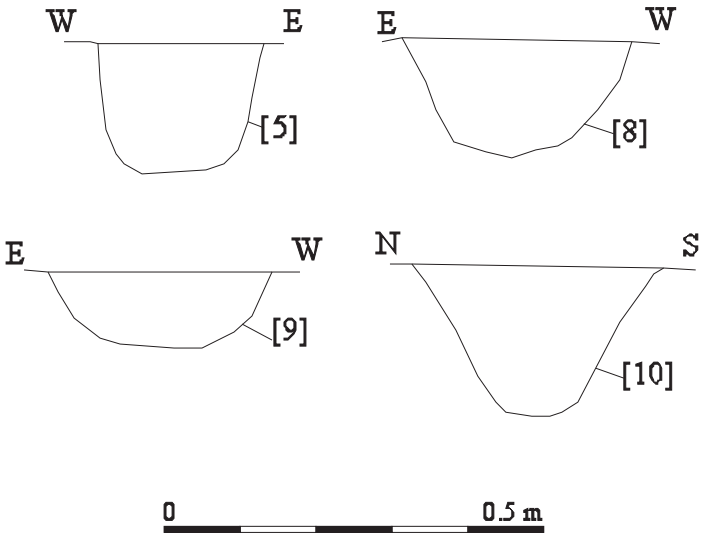


Figure 3. Postholes recorded during the Watching Brief

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery *(By Paul Blinkhorn)*

The pottery assemblage comprised 31 sherds with a total weight of 386g. All the pottery was medieval or later. The range of ware types present indicates that there was activity at the site throughout the medieval period, and into the 18th century, although most of the medieval sherds were redeposited in later features. Context 13

in trench 10 produced only a single medieval sherd, but it is extremely abraded, and is likely to be residual.

The assemblage was recorded using the conventions of the Leicestershire County type-series (Sawday 1994), as follows:

PM: Potter's Marston ware, 1100-1300. 1 sherd, 2g.
LY4: Lyveden/Stanion ware, 1200-1400. 1 sherd, 3g.
MP1: Midland Purple ware, 1375-1550. 3 sherds, 30g.
CW2: Cistercian ware 2, 1475-1550. 6 sherds, 24g.
FR: Frechen Stoneware, 1550+. 1 sherd, 18g.
EA6: Post-medieval blackwares, late 17th century +. 1 sherd, 14g.
EA3: Staffordshire Mottle Ware, 1650 – 1770. 2 sherds, 18g.
EA7: Earthenware, 1600-1850. 11 sherds, 223g.
SW4: Staffordshire White-glazed Stoneware, 1730+. 1 sherd, 3g.
SW5: English Brown Salt-Glazed Stoneware, 1700+. 3 sherds, 21g.

The following fabrics, not in the Leicester type-series, were also noted:

SHL: Shelly Coarseware, Northamptonshire/Bedfordshire types, AD1100-1400 (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 290-2). 1 sherd, 2g.

SS: Staffordshire Slip-Trailed Earthenware, AD1650-1750. Fine cream fabric with white slip and pale yellow lead glaze, commonest decoration is feathered dark brown trailed slip. Chiefly press-moulded flat wares, although small bowls and mugs etc are known. 1 sherd, 4g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of vessel and fabric types is very typical of the pottery of the region at all periods. The assemblage appears entirely domestic.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

| | | SHL | | PM | | LY4 | | MP1 | | FR | | CW2 | | EA6 | | SS | | EA7 | | EA3 | | SW5 | | SW4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tr | Cntxt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | Date |
| | U/S | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | | | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | | | 1 | 16 | | | U/S |
| | 2 | 1 | 2 | | | 1 | 26 | 2 | 28 | 1 | 18 | 3 | 12 | | | 1 | 4 | 4 | 132 | | | 1 | 2 | | | 18thC |
| 2 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 3 | | | 18thC |
| 4 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 21 | | | | | | | 18thC |
| 5 | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | L15thC |
| 5 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | L15thC |
| 9 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | 18thC |
| 10 | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 41 | | | | | | | 18thC |
| 10 | 13 | | | 1 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 13thC |
| 10 | 18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 18 | | | | | 18thC |
| 11 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 26 | | | | | | | 18thC |
| 12 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | L15thC |
| 13 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 3 | E18thC |
| 13 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 14 | | | | | | | | | | | 17thC |
| | Total | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 26 | 3 | 30 | 1 | 18 | 6 | 24 | 1 | 14 | 1 | 4 | 11 | 223 | 2 | 18 | 3 | 21 | 1 | 3 | |

## 5.2 Other Finds

A total of 9 flint artefacts were recovered from the subsoil (2) in the area of the detention basin. These consisted of 2 primary flakes, 3 secondary flakes, a retouched flake, two piercers and a core fragment. All show signs of post depositional damage. Although it is a very small assemblage it is characteristic of the later Neolithic. Colouration ranges from white, light grey through brown to dark grey and may indicate different sources of the raw material.

Fragments of clay tobacco pipe stem were found within contexts (2), (5/05), (5/06), (10/11), (10/13) and (10/18).

# 6 DISCUSSION

Aerial photographs of the area show lies within four distinct areas of ridge and furrow. The landowner has confirmed that the fields were unploughed in the 1960's and that ploughing did not take place until 1980. Since this time modern agricultural activity has virtually eradicated all trace of the ridge and furrow. Only to the south of the field in Trenches 11 and 13 did the bases of the furrows survive to any great degree. The watching brief confirmed the survival was in patches across the site.

Trenches 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9 were located along what was thought to be a headland or old field boundary roughly aligned north-west to south-east. It appeared on both the 1969 (HSL UK 69 919) and 1983 (MAL/83025) aerial photographs (Fig. 4). The evaluation trenches failed to locate any evidence of this feature. However, during the watching brief when the topsoil was stripped a faint darker soil mark (6) was observed following this linear. This mark could only be seen at a distance.

Trench 4 was located to sample an east-west linear seen on the 1983 aerial photograph (MAL/83025). It was though that this might be associated with a headland of the ridge and furrow. This linear corresponded with the rising natural gravels (4/04) in the southern end of the trench. Although it is possible that the rising gravels where protected by the headland, it is unlikely as this linear does not appear on the 1969 aerial photograph (HSL UK 69 919). However the ridge and furrow is indistinct in this area. The topsoil strip to the west of Trench 4 did not penetrate below the subsoil (4/02).

A second possible headland noted on the 1969 aerial photograph (HSL UK 69 919) was located just to the south (Fig. 4). Trench 12 was located across this feature. Unfortunately no evidence was recorded, although it is possible that modern agriculture has destroyed any remains.

The only feature located within Trench 5 was a modern geo-technical pit. Trench 7 was located to sample a north-west to south-east linear that appeared on both the 1969 (HSL UK 69 919) and 1983 (MAL/83025) aerial photographs (Fig. 4). This linear was confirmed to be a 4" land drain. It sat within a wide cut containing numerous fragments of broken drain pipe possibly indicating that it had been repaired or re-laid at a later date.

The 1969 aerial photograph (HSL UK 69 919, Fig. 4) recorded an old field boundary roughly aligned north to south within the field; Trench 10 was placed to sample this feature. This boundary appears to have consisted of two pairs of parallel ditches [10/10] & [10/12], and [10/15] & [10/17] separated by a fence line (10/14). The fills of ditches [10/10] and [10/17] both contained fragments of clay tobacco pipe stem and 18th century pottery.

Trench 14 was placed to locate the probable field boundary seen on the 1969 aerial photograph (HSL UK 69 919). The two ditches [14/04] and [14/05] appear to be this boundary. Judging by the aerial photograph these ditches would probably join up with some of those discovered in Trench 10.

The pottery recovered during the evaluation and watching brief was probably brought to the site during episodes of manuring throughout the medieval period and into the 18th century.

The field boundaries and ridge and furrow were recorded by the evaluation, however, the considerable damage sustained since 1980 means they have been more adequately recorded by the earlier aerial photographs.

Two trenches showed signs of pre-ridge and furrow features, none of which showed on any aerial photographs of the area. Trench 3 located a linear ditch and terminal [3/04]. It is possible that this is in fact an oval pit. This feature produced no finds when it was sample excavated. It appeared to run roughly east to west into the area of the detention basin, however, no continuation was recorded in this area during the watching brief. Two undated opposing ditch terminals [10/04] and [10/08] were located in Trench 10. These appeared to be aligned roughly north-east to south-west.

The watching brief recorded five undated features, either pits or postholes. Three postholes [8], [9] and [10] were within the area of the detention basin. Overall these features were too few and too spread out to form any coherent pattern. This probably indicates only limited activity in the area.

All of these features appeared to pre-date the ridge and furrow, and as no Anglo-Saxon or Roman pottery was recovered during the monitoring it is probable that these features are Neolithic contemporary with the flint artefacts recovered.

## 7 ARCHIVE

### Archive Contents

HNET Brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site records
The drawn record
The finds


Figure 4. 1969 Aerial Photograph (HSL UK 69 919) with the Trenches superimposed.

**Archive Location**

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services pending its transferral to:

Leicestershire Museum Services (Accession number X.A81.2006)

Leicestershire County Council, Room 500, County Hall, Leicester Road, Glenfield, Leicester LE3 8TE.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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