

## 3. NEOLITHIC AND EARLY BRONZE AGE LEICESTERSHIRE

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### 3.1 Introduction

Evidence for occupation within early prehistoric Leicestershire as previously stated (section 1.2), is not extensive and relies heavily on the identification of lithic scatters, crop marks and aerial photographic evidence. However, recent excavations within the East Midlands region have made important additions to the known evidence providing the means to better understand this period of time, such as the Raunds Area Project (Parry 2006), the National Mapping Programme for Nottinghamshire (Deegan 1999) and Northamptonshire (Deegan & Foard 2007). This chapter outlines the known Neolithic and early Bronze Age archaeological evidence for Leicestershire, with specific reference to the pottery assemblages recovered. The information is then placed into context through comparative assessment with the known regional evidence. This examines how the resource from these counties may be considered alongside the current trends in Neolithic and early Bronze Age research and regional syntheses (see Clay 2006; Bradley 2007; Cunliffe 2012).

### 3.2 Chronology

For this research, the early prehistoric chronology for the East Midlands region has been based upon the following period divisions outlined by Clay (2006: 71).

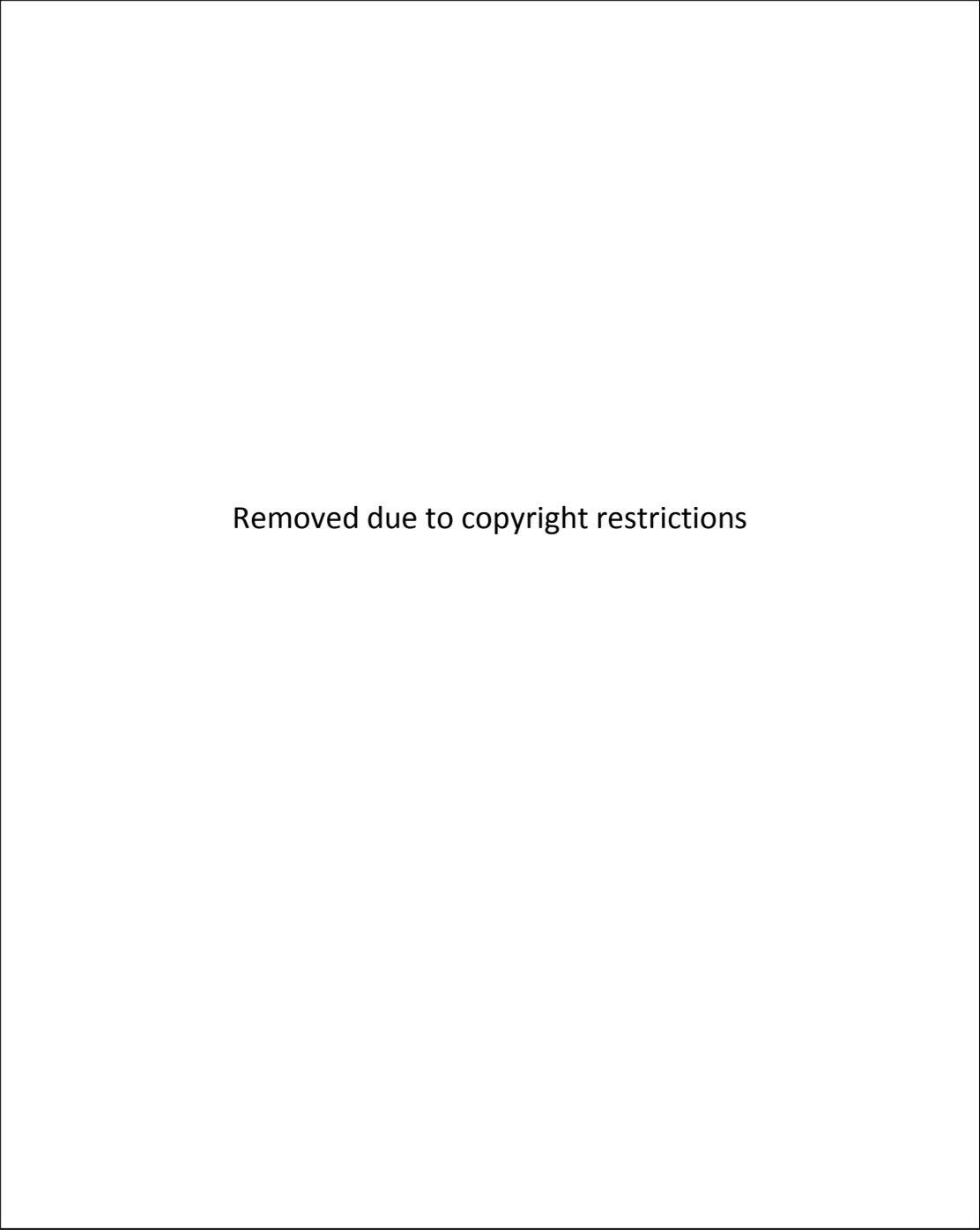
- Early Neolithic c. 4000 to 3500 BC
- Middle Neolithic c. 3500 to 2500 BC

- Late Neolithic c. 2500 to 2000 BC
- Early Bronze Age c. 2000 to 1500 BC

These chronological divisions have been used below to broadly organise and present the early prehistoric evidence for Leicestershire. Whilst some sites and their material evidence are easily attributable to one particular sub-division, others may be multi-phased and span several periods in time. These sites are covered in each relevant section highlighting the evidence that ties it to that particular chronological division.

### **3.3 Prehistoric Leicestershire: A Review of Previous Research**

The counties of Leicestershire (Figure 3.1) are located within the central East Midlands watershed. The county, including Rutland, covers 2,157 square kilometres and is bisected by a number of rivers, with the Soar, Welland, Trent and Avon being the main watercourses (Beamish 2004: 31). Leicestershire has no coastal areas, being surrounded by the counties of Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire. The county is predominantly covered by glacial drift deposits, with boulder clay, Liassic clay and Mercian mudstone dominating (Clay 2009: 92). Limestone and ironstone ridges are located within the eastern part of the county and the Precambrian uplands to the west (Beamish 2004: 31).



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**Figure 3.1** The East Midlands (Cooper 2006: Fig 1)

The historical background of research into the prehistory of Leicestershire has not been driven by antiquarians investigating barrows and standing stones. Nor does it have the lengthy research pedigree of other regions within the UK, for example,

Wessex, Orkney or Shetland (Section 1.1). This is demonstrated through its lack of substantial contribution to regional syntheses, most evident in the recent seminal publication *Gathering Time* by Whittle *et al.* (2011), whereby the county of Leicestershire is represented by a single causewayed enclosure, Husbands Bosworth (Butler *et al.* 2002). Even the surrounding counties have seen extensive investigations such as the prehistoric landscapes of the Fen edge area in Peterborough, Lincolnshire and Cambridge (Pryor 1998, 2001).

Until fairly recently, Leicestershire, was considered an unsuitable habitat for earlier prehistoric settlement due to its heavy clay drift geology (Clay 2009: 92). However, through the implementation of Planning and Policy Guidance 16 (PPG16), Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) and now the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), there has been an increased amount of fieldwork, in addition to an impressive contribution from local fieldwork groups instigated primarily by the Leicestershire Museums Arts and Records Service (LMARS). This has led to a reassessment of the county in terms of exploitation and settlement in the Mesolithic, Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age and a realisation that these clays were not the barrier to earlier prehistoric activity as once thought (Beamish 2004; Clay 2006, 2009).

### **3.3.1 The Early Neolithic in Leicestershire c. 4000 to 3500 BC**

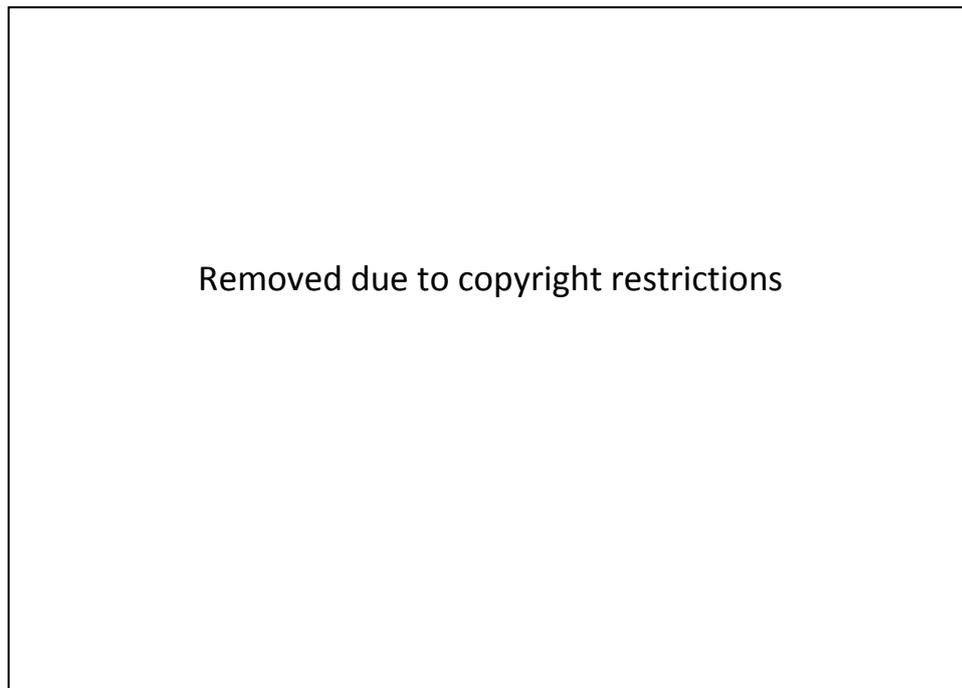
Much of the known evidence regarding the early Neolithic in Leicestershire has been derived from lithic scatters and not from direct settlement evidence (Clay 2002: 6-7). Ploughed out long barrows or enclosures are known or suspected from Misterton,

Ketton and Harston (Clay 1999: 2). However, little work has been undertaken at these three sites and thus these have only been assigned to the earlier Neolithic based upon comparative analogy as opposed to any precise scientific dating programme. A few sites have revealed earlier Neolithic activity or settlement evidence but unfortunately nothing on the scale of sites such as Lismore Fields (Knight *et al.* 2004: 67), in Buxton, Derbyshire. However, those sites in Leicestershire that do contain early Neolithic evidence include Croft (section 3.3.1.1), Oakham (section 3.3.1.2), Husbands Bosworth (section 3.3.1.3) and Eye Kettleby (section 3.3.1.4). One further site still under investigation is Brooksby (section 3.3.1.5), Leicestershire, where two pits containing flint bladelets and fine slightly burnished pottery resembling Carinated Bowl were recorded during archaeological monitoring of the construction of a haul road for a quarry (ULAS forthcoming). If this identification of Carinated Bowl is confirmed, it would constitute only the second find of its nature in the county alongside Oakham, Rutland (Clay 1998), demonstrating the scarcity of material evidence for this period.

#### **3.3.1.1 Croft, Leicestershire**

The earliest potential habitation site dating to the early Neolithic in Leicestershire is at Croft, excavated by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in 1994 following earlier evaluation by Leicestershire Archaeological Unit in 1993 (Hughes & Roseff 1995). The site was located at c. 67 m above Ordnance Datum (OD) on the western bank of the Thurlaston Brook. Despite ground conditions being extremely unsuitable for excavation, with constant flooding of the stripped area, a sample of the features present was undertaken. The excavations revealed two circular gullies, with diameters

of c. 6.5 and 7.5m alongside several pits (Hughes & Roseff 1995: 105). Due to the influx of water, the depth of these features was not established although the gullies have been interpreted as drip gullies for post-built round houses. Aside from one possible post hole or pit (F11, Figure 3.2), no internal features were recorded. The gullies appear too ephemeral to be external ditches for round cairns, particularly as substantial amounts of alluvium had sealed the site suggesting that the truncation of any mound material was not an issue (Hughes & Roseff 1995: 105). No ceramic material was recovered but the lithics indicate late Mesolithic which was confirmed by radiocarbon dates of 4450 to 4350 cal. BC on material not directly associated with the circular features (Smith *et al.* 2005: 373). The potential for this to be a transitional site has not been established but could have regional or even national implications if so proven.



**Figure 3.2** Plan of features at Croft, Leicestershire. F11 - indicated by the red arrow - represents a post hole/pit within a possible roundhouse (from Hughes & Roseff 1995: 104)

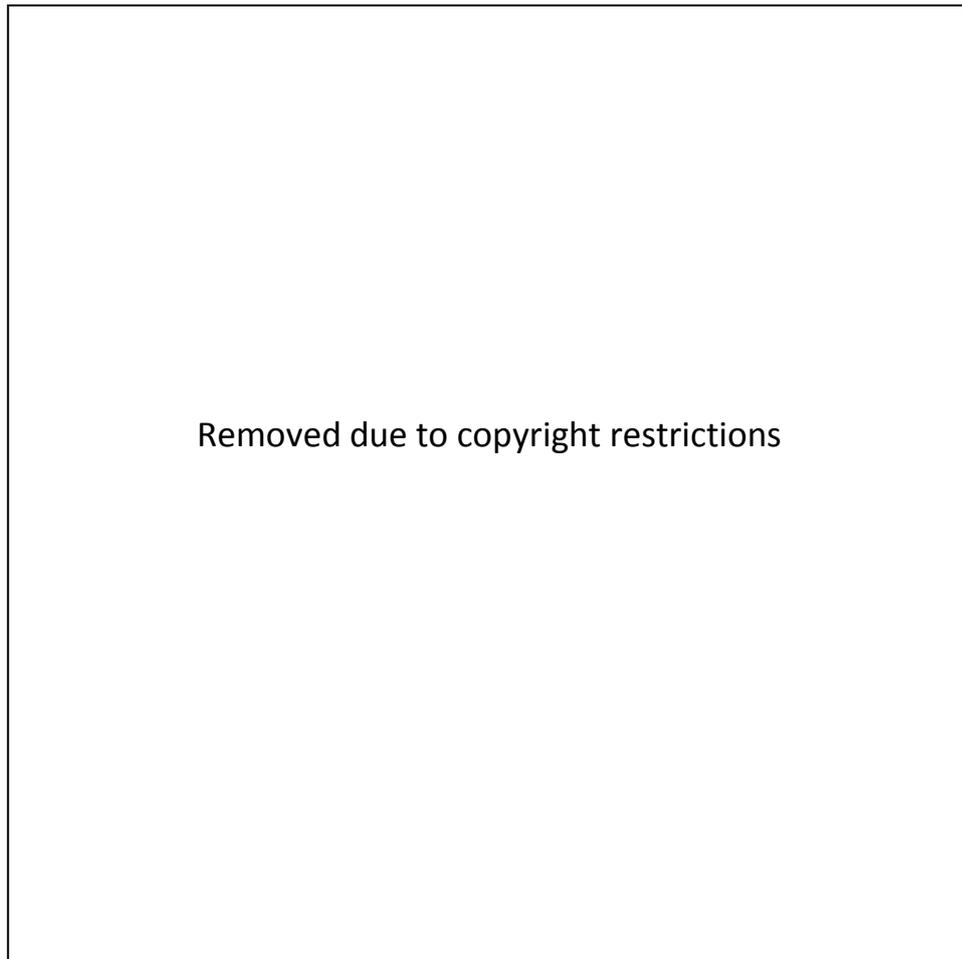
### **3.3.1.2 Oakham, Rutland**

A pit circle excavated between 1986 and 1987 at Oakham, Rutland by the Leicestershire Archaeological Unit, provides the earliest confirmed ceramics within the county (Clay 1989: 319). However, these Carinated Bowls may in fact represent earlier residual material within later Neolithic contexts. The site comprised a three phased pit circle of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age date, a burial and a ring ditch which was likely associated with one of the phases of the pit circle (Clay 1989: 325). Gibson states that the Carinated Bowls and Impressed Wares of the Mortlake sub-style could be contemporaneous (Gibson 1989: 320). However, more recent radiocarbon dating of features and material associated with ceramics has put Carinated Bowls from 4185 to 3975 cal BC (95% probability) and phasing out at 3715 to 3505 cal BC (95% probability) (Bayliss *et al.* 2011: 759) whilst a review of dates for Impressed Wares for a site at Willington are 3520 to 3340 cal BC for Ebbsfleet (95% probability), 3380 to 3110 cal BC for Fengate (95% probability) and 3130 to 2920 cal BC for Mortlake (75% probability) (Marshall *et al.* 2009: table 10; see also Table 2.1) indicating little or no overlap. The earliest radiocarbon date for material on site at Oakham provides a date of between 2140 to 1700 cal BC and was from an upper fill of one of the pit circles (Clay 1989: 327). A reassessment of the site, radiocarbon dates and the ceramic assemblage is warranted.

### **3.3.1.3 Husbands Bosworth, Leicestershire**

The site at Husbands Bosworth was discovered by geophysical survey in 1998 by the University of Leicester during works ahead of a quarry extension (Butler *et al.* 2002:

107). Although little work has been conducted on the monument itself following its designation as a Scheduled Monument, work on the fringes has revealed a number of features including a hengiform monument (Figure 3.3). Evaluation of the causewayed ditches also recovered Impressed Wares alongside transverse arrowheads in the upper ditch fills (Butler *et al.* 2002: 107). Radiocarbon dates are not available but Husbands Bosworth's closest dated neighbour, Briar Hill in Northampton, has a construction date of 4170 to 3355/4250 to 3355 cal BC (95% probability) or 3745 to 3415/3760 to 3415 cal BC (68% probability) (Healy *et al.* 2011:299). Dallington, slightly closer to Husbands Bosworth, has not had the same level of scientific dating but interestingly does possess a similar hengiform (Healy *et al.* 2011:300). The ceramic material recovered during evaluation at Husbands Bosworth and the surrounding area has predominantly been Impressed Ware, roughly dating to 3500 BC or thereafter (See section 3.3.1.2 above), although Bowl pottery has also been reported (Clay 2006: 77). The Impressed Ware was located within the upper ditch fills and thus could be assigned to the terminal usage of the monument rather than a *terminus ante quo* (Butler *et al.* 2002: 107). As work is ongoing here and the main portion of the monument is scheduled, it is unlikely that any radiocarbon dates will be forthcoming in the near future for the site or more specific dating of the Bowl pottery or Impressed Wares.



**Figure 3.3** Husbands Bosworth causewayed enclosure and immediate environs (From Butler *et al.* 2002: Fig 11.2)

#### **3.3.1.4 Eye Kettleby, Leicestershire**

Eye Kettleby predominantly dates to the early and middle Bronze Age but also contained limited earlier Neolithic material (Finn 2011). Decorated Bowl pottery of Mildenhall style dating to the early Neolithic was recovered from an isolated pit in an area subsequently enclosed within one of the early Bronze Age mortuary enclosures (Figure 3.4) (Finn 2011: 16). This pit was the only identified early Neolithic feature on site. The sherds all came from one vessel and have been dated to between 3700 and

3350 BC (Woodward 2011: 16-17). Later Neolithic and early Bronze Age ceramic material was also recovered from Eye Kettleby (see sections 3.3.3.3 & 3.3.4.5).



**Figure 3.4** Decorated Bowl from early Neolithic pit at Eye Kettleby (Finn 2011: Fig 16)

#### **3.3.1.5 Brooksby, Leicestershire**

Brooksby is an on-going quarry site predominantly displaying evidence of lower Palaeolithic activity. A number of hand axes have been recovered and organic material dating back circa 500,000 years has also been identified along the route of the River Bytham. However, it is the more recent material that is relevant to this study. Possible Neolithic or Bronze Age activity associated with five burnt mounds and at least one timber lined trough adjacent to palaeochannels was recorded during routine monitoring at the quarry (Leicestershire Fieldworker 2004).

At present these are unpublished and site information is based directly from the author's participation in the monitoring and excavations. Monitoring of the haul road located two pits, circa 50m from each other, one of which contained a number of bladelets and ceramic sherds. The pottery was quite fine, burnished on the exterior and with no obvious inclusions aside from some mica. Only body sherds were recovered, no rims or bases were found. It is suspected that these may be early Neolithic although no formal assessment of the artefacts has yet been undertaken. Little ceramic material was recovered from the burnt mounds and these also have yet to be published. However, Brooksby potentially represents further evidence of early Neolithic occupation in Leicestershire.

### **3.3.2 The Middle Neolithic in Leicestershire c. 3500 to 2500 BC**

The middle Neolithic is better represented in Leicestershire, although it is unclear if this is due to more frequent activity during this period or better site preservation. The main sites of interest include Rothley Lodge Farm (section 3.3.2.1) and Temple Grange (section 3.3.2.2) both located in Rothley to the west of the River Soar, Ashby Folville (section 3.3.2.3) and Hallam Fields (section 3.3.2.4). These sites have all provided examples of Impressed Wares.

#### **3.3.2.1 Rothley Lodge, Leicestershire**

Rothley Lodge was discovered in advance of the construction of a business park (Hunt 2004). The area was extensive with the evaluation covering a number of fields. Within this investigation, two discrete areas containing prehistoric remains were located. One

was of middle Neolithic date, whilst the second area displayed later Neolithic material (section 3.3.3.1). The middle Neolithic portion of the site was located on a westerly facing slope, 500m to the east of the River Soar (Hunt 2004: 19-20). This area was characterised by pits containing at least six Impressed Ware vessels along with frequent burnt hazelnut shells (Hunt 2004: 14). No structural evidence was recorded in either the evaluation (Hunt 2004) or later excavation of this site (Clay *et al.* 2006).

### **3.3.2.2 Temple Grange, Leicestershire**

Temple Grange was excavated by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in 2010 (Speed 2011). The site, located 2km south of the Rothley Lodge Farm site (section 3.1.2.1), contains hollows, one of which was radiocarbon dated to c. 3500 to 3200 cal BC and, at least four sunken post-built structures which were slightly later in date (Speed 2011: 25). The ceramics from the hollows were identified as resembling the Carinated Bowl tradition although some aspects, such as the invariably large rim size diameters, are slightly atypical (Speed 2011:26). The sherds were undecorated and both internal and external burnishing was noted. The site also contained late Neolithic (section 3.3.3.1) and early Bronze Age (section 3.3.4.1) components demonstrating its longevity or presence of residual material.

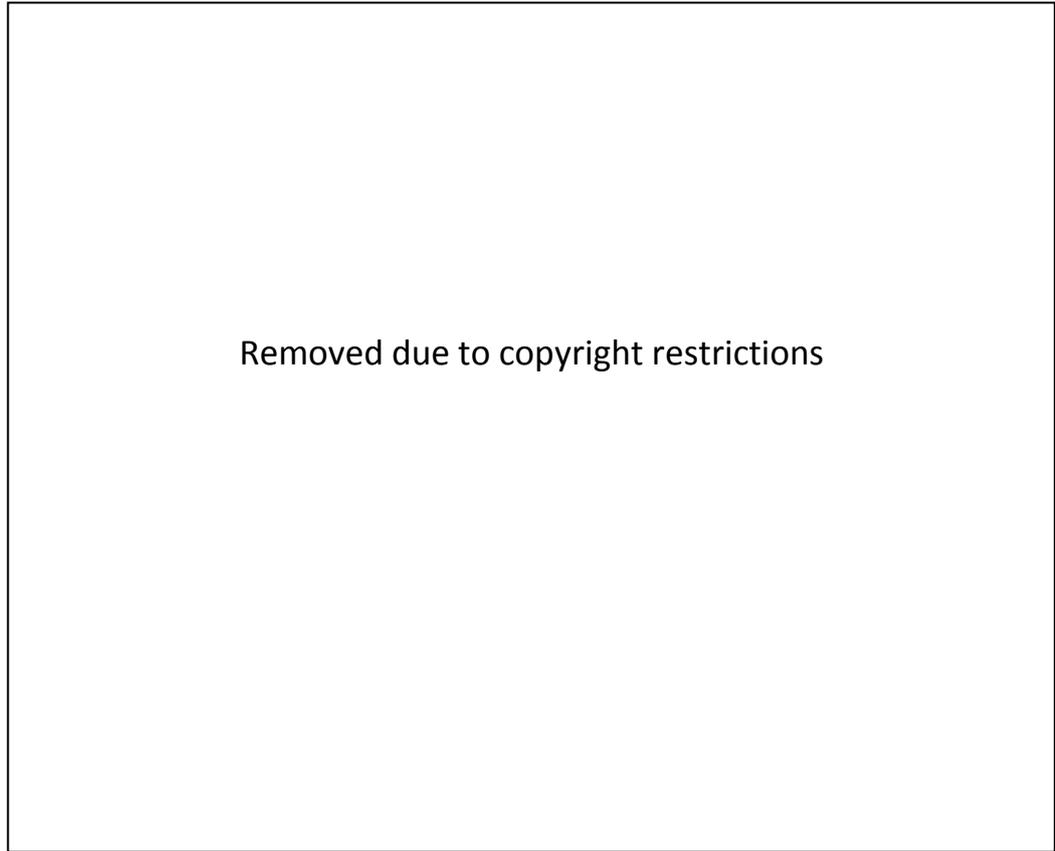
### **3.3.2.3 Ashby Folville, Leicestershire**

A linear pipeline was constructed between Ashby Folville and Thurstaston with associated archaeological monitoring and excavation as appropriate. The work was undertaken by Network Archaeology between 2004 and 2005 (Moore 2007). These

works revealed numerous sites along the length of the route including material of middle Neolithic date. The Neolithic site was within the Radcliffe-on-the Wreake parish and comprised a number of features, most predominantly pits and hollows. Upon excavation two of the pits, located 2m apart, were found to contain Impressed Wares, probably of the Fengate sub-style (McSloy 2007: 3). Some of the sherds recovered from the separate pits were conjoining, indicating their probable contemporaneous deposition (McSloy 2007: 3). Radiocarbon dates from material within each pit range between 3340 to 3010 cal BC, 3370 to 3090 cal BC and 3120 to 2910 cal BC (McSloy 2007: 3), indicating a middle Neolithic date.

#### **3.3.2.4 Hallam Fields, Leicestershire**

Residual material dating to the middle Neolithic was also found at Hallam Fields, Birstall (Marsden 2009: 60). This consisted of nine sherds of Impressed Wares recovered within an Iron Age feature (Figure 3.5). No Neolithic features were recorded on site and so the exact nature of any activity of this date is uncertain. However, it adds to the distribution of middle Neolithic activity within this area of Leicestershire, being circa 2.5km south of Rothley where two further sites with material of this date, Temple Grange (section 3.3.2.2) and Rothley Lodge Farm (section 3.3.2.1) have been found.



**Figure 3.5** Fengate style Impressed Wares from Hallam Fields, Birstall (From Speed 2009: Fig 57)

### **3.3.3 The Late Neolithic in Leicestershire c. 2500 to 2000 BC**

Later Neolithic sites in Leicestershire are more frequent than earlier Neolithic sites although still uncommon when compared regionally or nationally. However, several important assemblages have been located over the last decade that have allowed this period in Leicestershire to be more fully understood. It is common to group together the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age due to the increasing overlaps in chronology although they have been treated separately here where possible. The sites focused on include Rothley Lodge Farm and Temple Grange, both Rothley (section 3.3.3.1) and

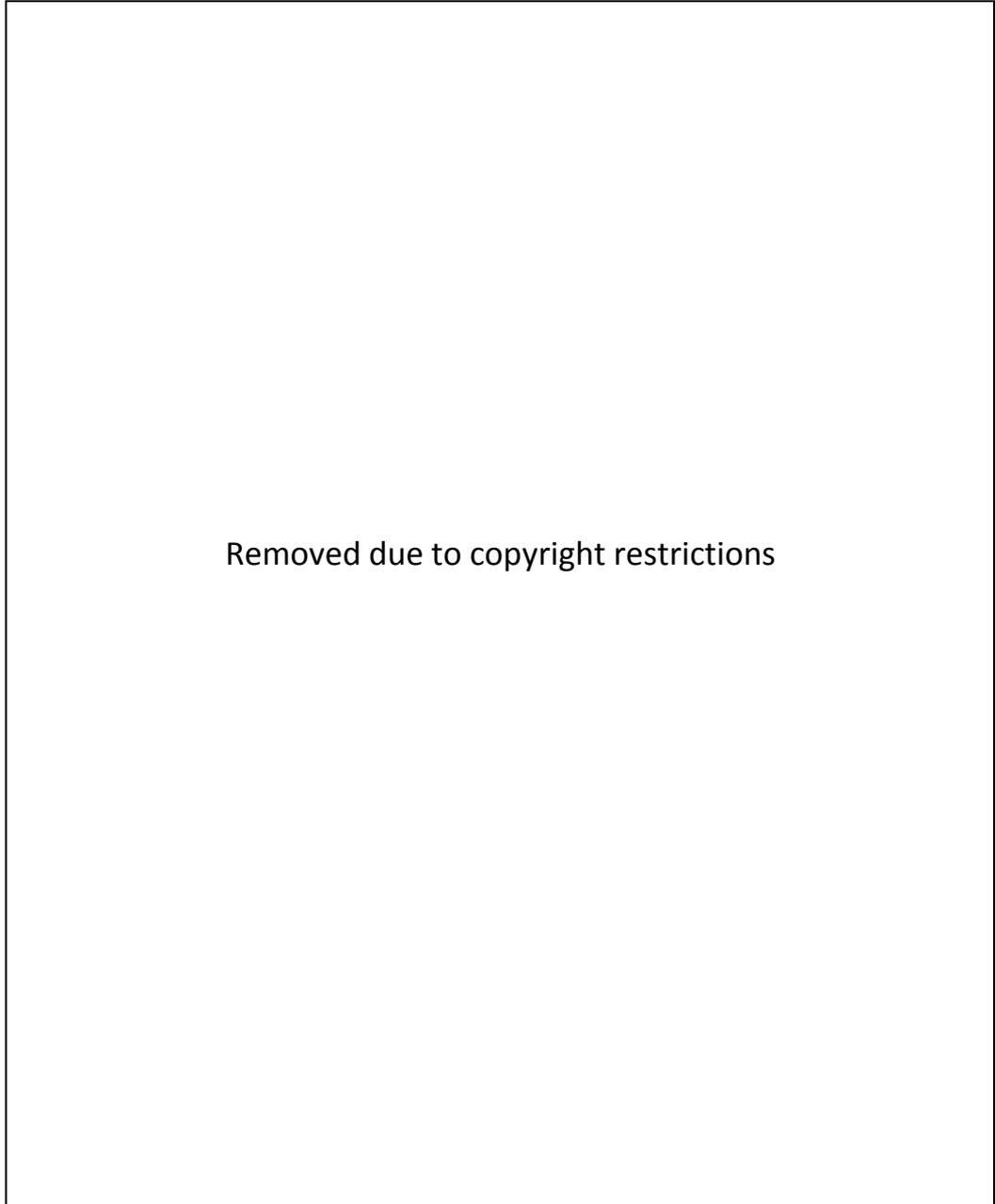
Elmsthorpe Rise, Braunstone (section 3.3.3.2). Evidence has also been identified at various other sites within the county, including Melton Road, Syston (Meek 1998), where late Neolithic Grooved Ware as well as Beaker was recovered - the latter petrographically analysed as a part of this study (sections 5.5 & 7.4). In addition to this, a limited number of Grooved Ware sherds were recovered from Eye Kettleby near Melton Mowbray (Beamish 2004: 37).

### **3.3.3.1 Rothley Lodge Farm and Temple Grange, Rothley, Leicestershire**

Rothley Lodge Farm and Temple Grange both contained elements of later Neolithic settlement evidence in addition to the early Neolithic evidence highlighted in sections 3.1.2.1 & 3.1.2.2). Possible structural remains were recorded at both sites (see Figures 3.6 & 3.7) (Clay *et al.* 2006, Speed 2011), although the evidence for settlement is stronger at Temple Grange, those structural features associated with Grooved Ware at Temple Grange are limited whilst almost all of the Grooved Ware at Rothley Lodge Farm was associated with a single sunken featured structure and adjacent post holes and pits (Figure 3.8). The finds assemblage from this portion of the site was exceptional for Leicestershire and included an engraved plaque with figurative art, at least two complete ceramic vessels, a stone rubber, two ceramic balls and several axes amongst the highlights (Figure 3.9) (Clay *et al.* 2006: 1). The ceramics predominantly belonged to the Woodlands sub style of the Grooved Ware tradition (Clay *et al.* 2006: 7).



**Figure 3.6** Plan of structure one at Temple Grange, Rothley (Speed 2011: Fig 26)



**Figure 3.7** Plan of sunken structure at Rothley Lodge Farm, Rothley, including small finds (Clay *et al.* 2006: Fig 2)



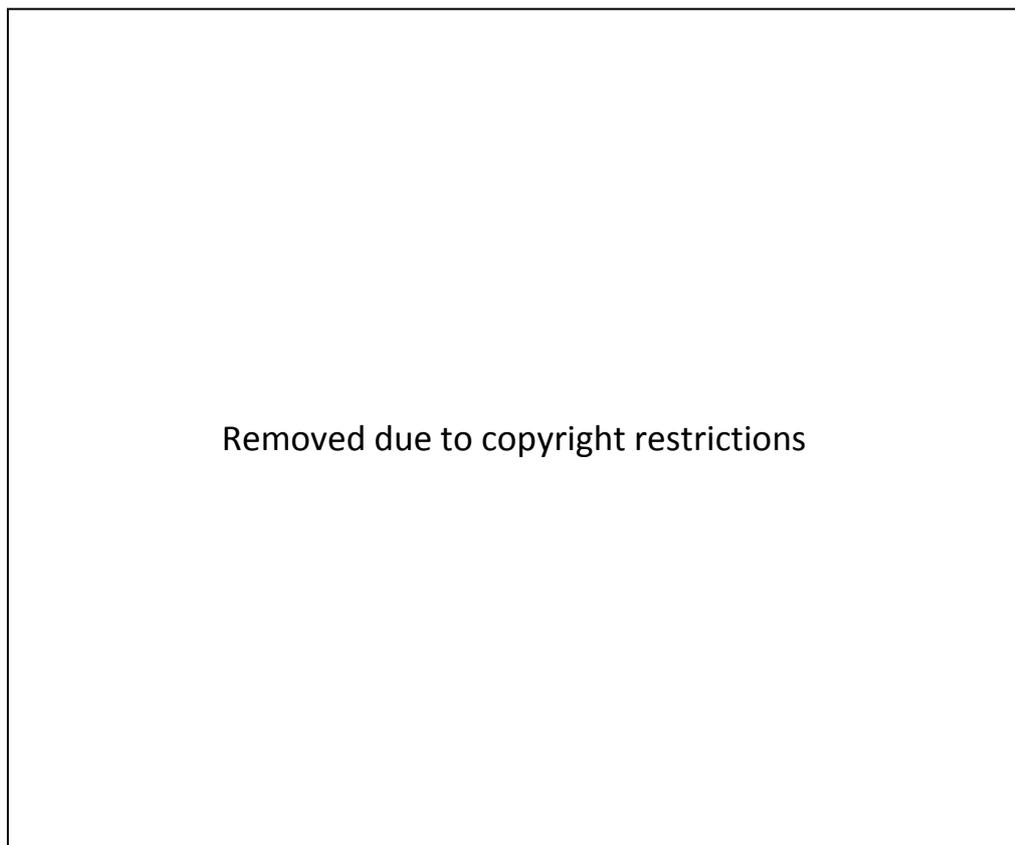
**Figure 3.8** Conjoining Grooved Ware sherds from sunken feature at Rothley Lodge Farm, Rothley (Photo: Author)



**Figure 3.9** Contents of a single pit at Rothley Lodge Farm (note frequent burnt material), Rothley (Photo: Author)

### 3.3.3.2 Elmsthorpe Rise, Braunstone, Leicestershire

Grooved Ware has also been located at Elmsthorpe Rise, Braunstone, within the City of Leicester during an archaeological investigation by Archaeological Project Services (Albone 2001). The later Neolithic remains were concentrated in two pits, one being more of a shallow hollow and the second being sub rectangular (Albone 2001: 4-6). The ceramics were assigned to the Clacton sub-style of the Grooved Ware tradition (Figure 3.10) (Allen 2001: 4). Albone postulates that structured deposition is highly likely for this site (Allen 2001: 11). Again, no substantial evidence for settlement or activity has been found at this site, the evidence is purely derived from the pit features (Albone 2001: 4-6; 10-12).



**Figure 3.10** Grooved Ware from Eye Kettleby (uppermost) and Elmsthorpe Rise, Braunstone (lower) (Beamish 2004: 3)

### **3.3.3.3 Eye Kettleby, Leicestershire**

A site at Eye Kettleby, outside Melton Mowbray, revealed limited evidence of late Neolithic activity (Finn 2011). The site largely consisted of early Bronze Age mortuary enclosures and a cremation cemetery as well as Anglo-Saxon activity. However, two isolated pits did contain evidence of Neolithic activity, one of early Neolithic date (section 3.3.1.4) and the second later with a small cup of Grooved Ware style (Gibson 2011: 18).

### **3.3.4 The Early Bronze Age in Leicestershire c. 2000 to 1500 BC**

Evidence for the early Bronze Age is comparatively prolific in Leicestershire considering the paucity of evidence for the Neolithic. There are between 250 and 300 early Bronze Age barrows known or suspected from the county (Beamish 2004: 35). Clarke's corpus of British Beaker pottery (Clarke 1970: 474-475) lists examples from Glaston in Rutland, Harston, Knipton, Melton Mowbray, North Kilworth and Noseley, all Leicestershire. Most recently several Beakers were recovered during excavations at Asfordby, near Melton Mowbray, on an *in situ* Mesolithic camp site which contained early Bronze Age features (Clay *pers. comm*; Cooper 2011). Sites focused on in this section include, Temple Grange (section 3.3.4.1) (Speed 2011). Further evidence for early Bronze Age activity within Leicestershire includes Beaker pottery from Syston (Meek 1998) and Castle Donington (Coward 2004), samples of which have been included within the petrographic assessment for this research (Chapter 7). Ritual and funerary sites of early Bronze Age date are also known from Lockington (section 3.3.4.2) (Hughes 2000) and Cossington (section 3.3.4.3) (Thomas 2008), both barrow

sites. In addition to this is Eye Kettleby (section 3.3.4.4), which possesses opposing mortuary enclosures and a cremation cemetery (Finn 2011).

#### **3.3.4.1 Temple Grange, Rothley**

Temple Grange contained evidence from the early Bronze Age in the form of two Beakers and a Collared Urn (Cooper 2011: 28-29). However, these were in the minority and the majority of the features and artefacts recovered from the site were of Neolithic date (sections 3.3.2.2. & 3.3.3.1). Beaker material and the Collared Urns were recovered from pits whilst the other Beaker material was unstratified (Cooper 2011: 28-29). The stratified rustic Beaker possessed finger pinch decoration similar to a recently excavated example at Asfordby near Melton (Cooper 2011: 28). The Collared Urn is comparable to one recovered from the nearby Bronze Age barrow site at Cossington (Cooper 2011: 28).

#### **3.3.4.2 Lockington Barrow Cemetery**

The site at Lockington, between Castle Donington and Kegworth, contained several early Bronze Age barrows with one of the richest gold assemblages in the county of this date (Hughes 2000). The site was comprised of a barrow cemetery, parts of which were excavated by different organisations over a period of five decades (Hughes 2000). The resulting ceramic assemblage included primarily early Bronze Age material along with some Iron Age vessels and a handful of possible Neolithic sherds (Woodward 2000: 48-60). A programme of petrographic analysis was undertaken by Williams (2000: 60-61) and is included in Section 4.5.9. The main focus of interest here is the early Bronze Age Beakers and Food Vessel.

### **3.3.4.3 Cossington Barrow Cemetery**

Aerial photographs from Cossington, near to Syston, revealed the presence of three round barrow features, which were subsequently excavated in two separate phases, one in 1976 and the latest in 1999 (Thomas 2008: xiv). The excavations recorded the pre-barrow landscape evidence, the early Bronze Age barrows, a later Iron Age farmstead and lastly Saxon re-use of the site. The main focus of this study is the Beakers and Food Vessels recovered during the excavations (Allen 2008 27-36). Petrographic analysis of the ceramics was undertaken by Vince (2000: 36-37) and is included in Section 4.5.8.

### **3.3.4.4 Eye Kettleby Bronze Age Funerary Site**

As previously highlighted, Eye Kettleby was located during an excavation to investigate Anglo-Saxon remains on the periphery of Melton Mowbray (Finn 2011). The main focus of the site was early and middle Bronze Age ritual and funerary activity in the form of mortuary enclosures containing a cremation cemetery (Finn 2011: 31-36). The site saw additional activity in the form of Neolithic pits. The ceramic assemblages from the early Bronze Age mortuary area contained Food Vessels (Woodward 2011: 38-40).

## **3.4 Early prehistoric Leicestershire in its Regional Context**

Leicestershire is clearly not overwhelmed by a multitude of sites demonstrating Neolithic settlement. However, more extensive evidence for settlement and exploitation patterns are becoming apparent as fieldwork is undertaken in previously uninvestigated areas (Beamish 2004: 38). The nature of the evidence that we do have

suggests small limited scale occupation, isolated pits and hollows rather than extensive habitation and exploitation. We do not see the tradition of monument building, timber long houses, communal burial sites, rock art (aside from cup and ring marked stones at Lockington and Tugby (Clay 2006: 81) or other defining Neolithic characteristics which help to delineate the period from the preceding Mesolithic period (Bradley 2007: 27-177, Cunliffe 2012: 133-178). It is recognised that regional variations occurred for the commencement of and subsequent spread and development of the Neolithic but it is not the intention here to compare and contrast every facet of this cultural phenomena.

The exceptions to the rather limited evidence of Neolithic activity in the county are the causewayed enclosure at Husbands Bosworth (section 3.3.1.3) (Butler *et al.* 2002), the pit circle at Oakham (section 3.3.1.2) (Clay 1989) and the three potential long enclosures or barrows at Misterton, Ketton and Harston (section 3.3.1) (Clay 1999: 2). The causewayed enclosure at Husbands Bosworth represents something of an anomaly when it comes to the county in general as ritual and communal monuments are generally absent. It is assumed to have been the product of co-operative social groups and a communal meeting place for a variety of functions (Whittle *et al.* 2011) and would have formed a focal point in the landscape. The Neolithic sites identified are, for the most part, located close the water sources indicating the importance of water and rivers, particularly the Rivers Soar and Wreake. Whilst this handful of larger communal and ritual sites may tally with the regional and national picture, the known evidence points towards a Neolithic in Leicestershire frequently characterised by pit deposits.

Some of these are structured deposits, others perhaps significant for their lack of obvious or overt ritual or structured deposition. In addition there are also a number of sunken and sometimes post-built, structures. Whilst other areas see pits in large numbers and groups, such as at Tattershall Thorpe in Lincolnshire (Chowne 1993), contributions from Leicestershire are usually in single figures.

The early Bronze Age is perhaps better represented, both numerically and typologically. Certainly barrows are frequent (Beamish 2004: 35) and a number of sites are known, including a Bronze Age enclosure located circa 100m to the south-west of the causewayed enclosure at Husbands Bosworth (ULAS forthcoming) and two early to middle Bronze Age opposing mortuary enclosures at Eye Kettleby with associated cremation urns (section 3.3.1.4) (Finn 2011). One relatively lacking Bronze Age phenomena in Leicestershire are standing stones, whether alignments or circles. However, this could reflect an absence of usable material as there are a limited number of solitary standing stones such as the reputed *Humber Stone* at Humberstone. A number of the known non-ritual sites have been located during excavations of sites of a different age, such as the Collared Urns at the Iron Age site of Hallam Fields (section 3.3.4.2) (Speed 2009). The increasingly sedentary, domesticated and hierarchical lifestyle of the Bronze Age is predominantly apparent from the barrows, particularly Lockington (Hughes 2000) and Cossington (Thomas 2008).

### **3.5 Summary**

This review of the more prominent Neolithic and early Bronze Age sites in Leicestershire has shown that evidence is known for each of the periods and sub-periods covered. However, this evidence is in no way extensive. The known data from the Neolithic is characterised by isolated pits, hollows or scoops with infrequent structural evidence coming from a limited number of sites. These are complemented, or rather contrasted, by the sole known causewayed enclosure at Husbands Bosworth and the late Neolithic timber circle at Oakham. Ceramic assemblages of Neolithic date are being expanded by fieldwork but still certain typologies are lacking in sufficient numbers for the creation of an effective fabric dataset. The early Bronze Age is better represented, although this is frequently from funerary and ritual sites including Eye Kettleby, Lockington and Cossington. Settlement evidence is scarce, although it is hoped that the growth of fieldwork will locate remains in the future.

The evidence for both the Neolithic and early Bronze Age cannot neatly be slotted into the various regional summaries put forward by the leading prehistoric exponents. It appears to be more the case that specific elements are relevant to or fit into the known evidence for Leicestershire, whilst others are missing, or have not yet been uncovered. Whether these missing elements are yet to be found or simply did not exist within the county is not a question that can be answered here. However, the evidence for occupation and the presence of ceramic assemblages within Leicestershire, whether or not it follows any specific patterns, does provide an interesting insight into

the early prehistoric periods within this area of the East Midlands and also provides the context for this research.