

Land rear of 11 Main Street, Ravenstone, Leicestershire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1588

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*Working for
Warwickshire*

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation consisting of four trial trenches was undertaken on behalf of Cameron Homes in advance of a potential housing development. One trench excavated near the site of a former rope-walk revealed two possible 19th century postholes, but otherwise no significant archaeological deposits were recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission is being sought from North West Leicestershire District Council for a residential development of six houses on land at rear of 11 Main Street, Ravenstone, Leicestershire, LE67 2AS.

1.2 The archaeological advisor to the planning authority has recommended that a field evaluation would be necessary to inform the authority of the potential of the development to impact on archaeological deposits.

1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority. The approved schemes included the provision for six trial trenches. This report presents the results of the excavation of four trenches excavated in November 2015. The Museum accession number is X.A109.2015.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The development site is to the rear of no. 11 Main Street, Ravenstone, Leicestershire. The site is currently a rear garden with lawns and a border of trees.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Tarporley Siltstone Formation (BGS 2015).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The earliest archaeological feature recorded in the vicinity of the site is a pit alignment believed to date from the Bronze Age (Leicestershire Historic Environment no. MLE7259). The feature is visible on aerial photographs from 2006 (including google earth) and is aligned roughly east-west c.300m north of the site.

3.2 The site is within the historic settlement core of Ravenstone (MLE4831) and is on the edge of the Conservation area (DLE658). The village is mentioned in Domesday (1086) as *Ravenestorp* and therefore has Saxon or earlier origins. There are documents referring to a castle in the 12th century but it was short lived and thoroughly destroyed leaving no evidence for its exact location. The land around the village was formerly heathland as attested by the nearby place names such as Normanton-le-heath. Until the 19th century the Parish was partly in Derbyshire with the majority in Leicestershire. The Leicestershire portion was within the Hundred of West Goscote (Curtis 1831). The Historic Landscape Character Assessment records that the enclosure of the fields surrounding the village was largely piecemeal, implying the gradual enclosure of the heathland from the post-medieval period onwards.

3.3 The church of St Michael (MLE12364, National Heritage List for England no 1074380) retains elements of 14th century detail although it was restored in the 19th century. The earliest dwellings are 21-23 Main Street, a timber-framed pair of cottages (MLE12377, NHLE1074384). Archaeological work in the garden revealed 17th century and later remains associated with occupation of the dwelling (MLE18617, ELE7320). A brick built early 18th century house stands at no.7 Main Street (MLE12376, NHLE1177495) and the development site incorporates the end of its long narrow garden. Further south along Main Street is a row of 18th century cottages at numbers 33-37 (MLE12379, NHLE1361215). A series of Almshouses were built in 1711 as part of the hospital which was endowed by Rebecca, the mother of Francis Wollarton Wilkins (MLE12371, NHLE 1177479). The outer precinct wall is also Listed (MLE12375, NHLE1074383).

3.4 The Victorian school was described as a 'National School for boys and girls' in 1861 (MLE20632). The history of the school building was detailed in the Heritage Assessment submitted with the planning application (ELE8589/8791, David Burton-Pye 2013).

3.5 Other historic buildings include Leacroft House (MLE12369, NHLE1307422); The Beeches (MLE12370, NHLE 10744382); Ingarsby and Warneford House (MLE12378, NHLE1177504); and several Coach Houses on Main Street (MLE12366/12367/12368, NHLE1252198/1361213) which were part of the stable range for Ravenstone Hall (MLE12365/NHLE1177459). Ravenstone Hall, a brick built country house, is earlier than its stable ranges, dating from c.1750. There are 19th century references to fishponds associated with the Hall (MLE4817), however, the location of them is not known. The Chapel

and Chaplains house are still standing and are Listed Buildings (MLE12373/12374, NHLE1361214).

3.6 Other significant Heritage Assets within the study area are the possible remains of post-medieval garden features relating to Ravenstone Hall (MLE4809) and the war memorial to those fallen in the First and Second World Wars which stands within the churchyard (MLE20727). The main road through the village was turnpiked in 1753 (MLE20653) and the Hinckley to Tonge turnpike is to the east (MLE20915).

3.7 Archaeology Warwickshire carried out an evaluation and subsequent excavation prior to the development of the rear gardens to the north-west of the proposed site on behalf of Cameron Homes in December 2014 (Gethin 2014). No significant archaeological features were found in the garden immediately adjacent to the site. Medieval and post-medieval occupation evidence was recorded to the rear of the school (Rann in prep).

3.8 Other archaeological work that has taken place in the village includes an archaeological watching brief during the laying of a gas pipe at the Church in 1999. No archaeological remains were recorded (ELE3840). To the north of the village fieldwalking survey recovered prehistoric flint and medieval and post-medieval pottery (ELE4161). A desk-based assessment undertaken in 2013 suggested that there was good potential for Iron Age and Roman archaeology to south of the village (ELE8732).

3.9 Cursory examination of early Ordnance Survey mapping (Old-maps.co.uk) has revealed that the south-eastern edge of the site was used as a 'ropewalk' – for the manufacture of rope. It may have had an associated building in the north-eastern corner of the site. The remainder of the proposed development area was paddock and part of the rear garden of no. 11 Main Street. By 1960 the ropewalk had been incorporated into the long rear garden of no. 11.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there are any significant archaeological remains in the area to be developed; to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the area.

4.2 Secondary aims include placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.

4.3 The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.

4.4 It was proposed to dig a 5% sample of the area to be developed with six trial trenches; one 30m x 1.6m, two 20m x 1.6m and three 15m x 1.6m. However, it proved on the day that two of the trenches could not be dug. Trenches 2, 3 and 4 were originally targeted on the rope walk and associated building shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883.

4.5 The four excavated trenches (1, 3, 4 and 5) were opened up by a 5-tonne, 360° excavator with a 1.60m wide, toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and other plough soils were removed under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist until either the top of archaeological remains or geological natural was reached.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

5.1 Trench 1 was excavated to geological natural reddish brown clay (102). This was overlaid by between 0.20 and 0.30m of greyish brown silty clay (101), probably representing a cultivation soil in the small paddocks to the rear of Main Street. Above this was 0.23m of dark greyish brown clay loam topsoil.

Trench 3

5.2 Trench 3 was excavated to geological natural reddish brown clay with occasional gravel patches (302). Overlying this was 0.07-0.15m of greyish brown silty clay (301) which was covered by 0.20 to 0.24m of dark greyish brown clay loam topsoil (300).

Trench 4

5.3 Trench 4 was excavated to geological natural (401) which was mostly reddish brown clay but also contained yellowish brown clay patches and gravel patches. Cut into the geological natural were two probable post-holes (403 and 405). Post-hole 403 was 0.5m long, 0.27m wide and 0.15m deep and was filled with very dark brown clay loam (404) from which a single sherd of 19th century pottery was recovered. Post-hole 405 was roughly oval

in shape being 0.64m long and 0.48m wide. It was 0.07m deep and was filled with brown silty clay (406). No dating was recovered from this fill but the excavator considered the feature likely to be late post-medieval in date. The trench contained 0.20-0.22m of greyish brown silty clay (401) which was covered by 0.30 to 0.40m of dark greyish brown clay loam topsoil (400).

Trench 5

5.4 Trench 5 was excavated to geological natural (502) which was a mix of reddish brown and yellowish brown silty clay with gravel patches. Overlying this was 0.35m of greyish brown silty clay (501) which was covered by up to 0.40m of very dark greyish brown clay loam topsoil (500).

5.5 Very occasional sherds of 19th to 20th century pottery were noted within the topsoil from all of the trenches.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 No certainly significant archaeological features were recorded in the excavated trenches, although the two possible post-holes in Trench 4 could relate to the former rope-walk.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Adam Routley for commissioning the work.

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1. Trench 1



2. Trench 3



3. Trench 4



4. Possible posthole 403



5. Possible posthole 405



6. Trench 5

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
100	Topsoil	
101	Layer	
102	Geological natural	
200	Topsoil	
201	Layer	
202	Geological natural	
300	Topsoil	
301	Layer	
302	Geological natural	
400	Topsoil	
401	Layer	
402	Geological natural	
403	Gully	19th century
404	Gully fill (of 302)	19th century
405	Gully	
406	Gully fill (of 304)	

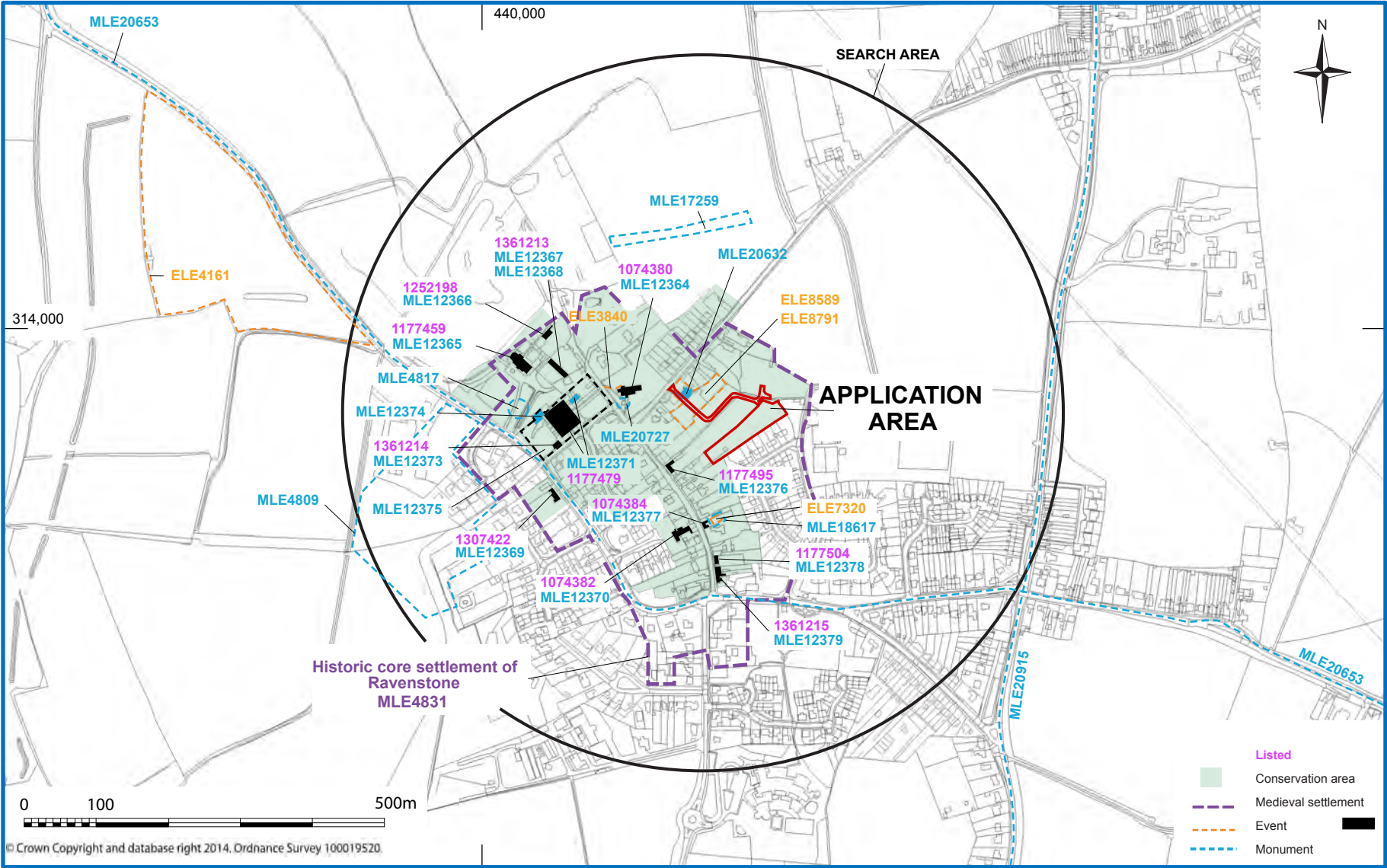


Fig 1: Site location and Historic Environment Information

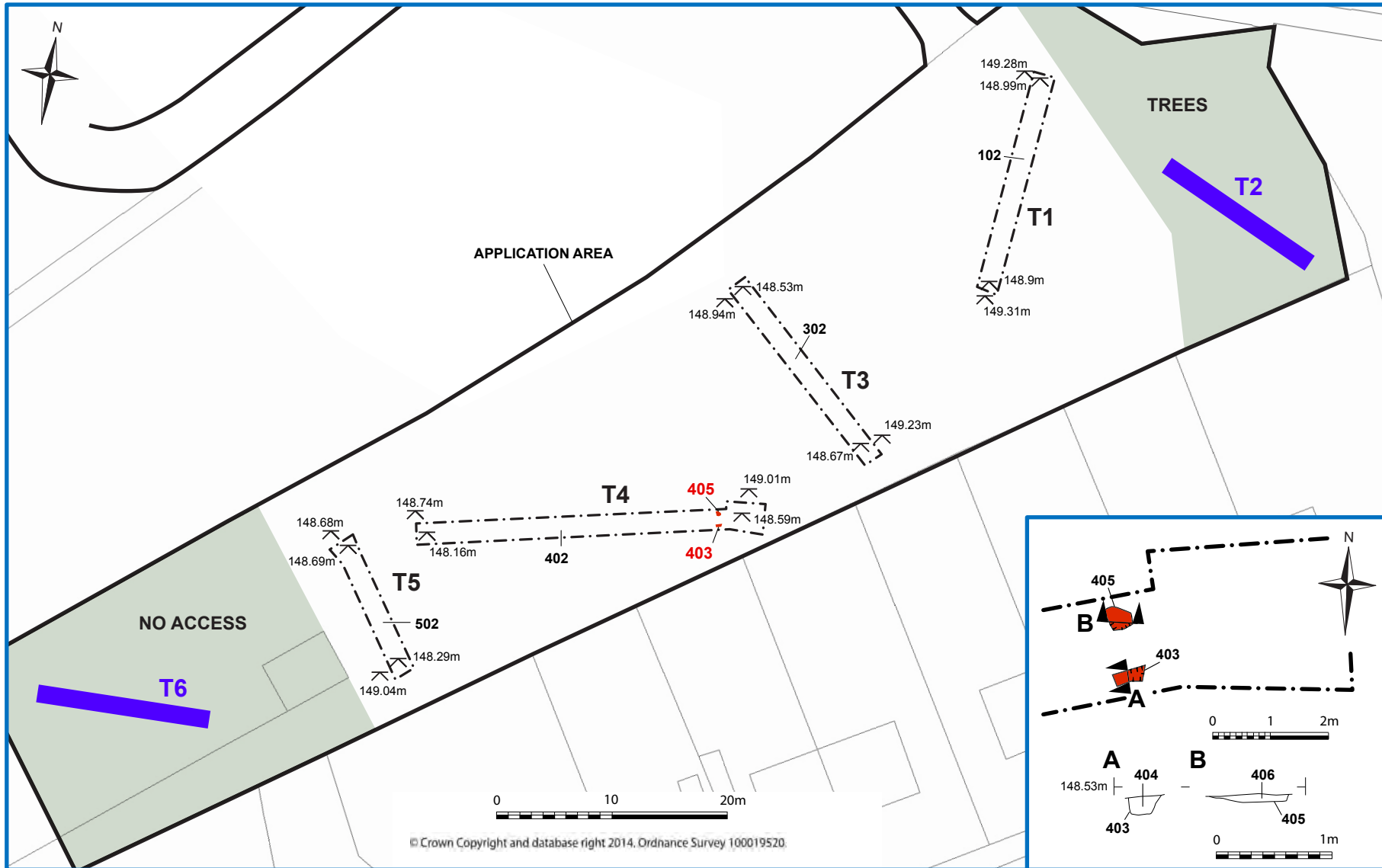


Fig 2: Location of excavated trenches, detail Trench 4 and section A, and unexcavated trenches 2 and 6