



**Archaeological excavation  
on land to the rear of  
138 Bardon Road, Coalville  
Leicestershire  
February 2016**

Report No. 16/99

Author: Adam Reid

Illustrator: Olly Dindol



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Report No. 16/99

Project Manager: Mo Muldowney

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The cremation deposit	Andy Chapman
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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>OASIS No: molanort1-253797</b>	
Project title	Archaeological excavation on land to the rear of 138 Bardon Road, Coalville, Leicestershire, February 2016		
Summary	MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Peter Shambrook of Keepmoat Homes to carry out archaeological mitigation work on land to the rear of Bardon Road, Coalville, prior to the development of the site. Two trial trenches and an area measuring 0.31ha were excavated. The remains of post-medieval cultivation had severely impacted on the site and only a single undated ring gully and the remains of a modern field boundary were identified, in addition to the truncated cremation burial that was identified during the trial trench evaluation.		
Project type	Mitigation		
Site status	None		
Previous work	Geophysical survey (Fisher 2015) Evaluation (Muldowney and Chinnock 2015)		
Current land use	Pasture		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type/period	MBA cremation, undated ditch		
Significant finds	MBA pottery		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Leicestershire		
Site address	Bardon Road, Coalville		
Postcode	LE67 4BJ		
OS co-ordinates	SK 4383 1326		
Area (sq m/ha)	0.31 ha		
Height aOD	155-160m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project Brief originator	Leicestershire County Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Adam Reid and Chris Chinnock, MOLA Northampton		
Project Manager	Mo Muldowney, MOLA Northampton		
Sponsor or funding body	Keepmoat Homes		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	22/02/2016		
End date	29/02/2016		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	Location (Accession no.)	Content	
Physical	Leicestershire Museums Service (X.A21.2015)	Pottery	
Paper		Site records; background data, photographs; plans and sections on permatrace	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)			
Title	Archaeological excavation on land to the rear of 138 Bardon Road, Coalville, Leicester, February 2016		
Serial title & volume	MOLA Northampton reports 16/99		
Author(s)	Adam Reid		
Page numbers	14		
Date	3 June 2016		

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# Archaeological excavation on land to the rear of 138 Bardon Road, Coalville Leicestershire, February 2016

## Abstract

*MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Peter Shambrook of Keepmoat Homes to carry out archaeological mitigation work on land to the rear of Bardon Road, Coalville, prior to the development of the site. Two trial trenches and an area measuring 0.31ha were excavated. The remains of post-medieval cultivation had severely impacted on the site and only a single undated ring gully and the remains of a modern field boundary were identified, in addition to the truncated cremation burial that was identified during the trial trench evaluation.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by Peter Shambrook for Keepmoat Homes to undertake archaeological mitigation on land to the rear of 138 Bardon Road, Coalville (NGR SK 4383 1326, Fig 1). The work was undertaken in advance of residential development comprising the construction of 135 homes with associated external works and parking (Planning Ref: 15/01015/FUL).

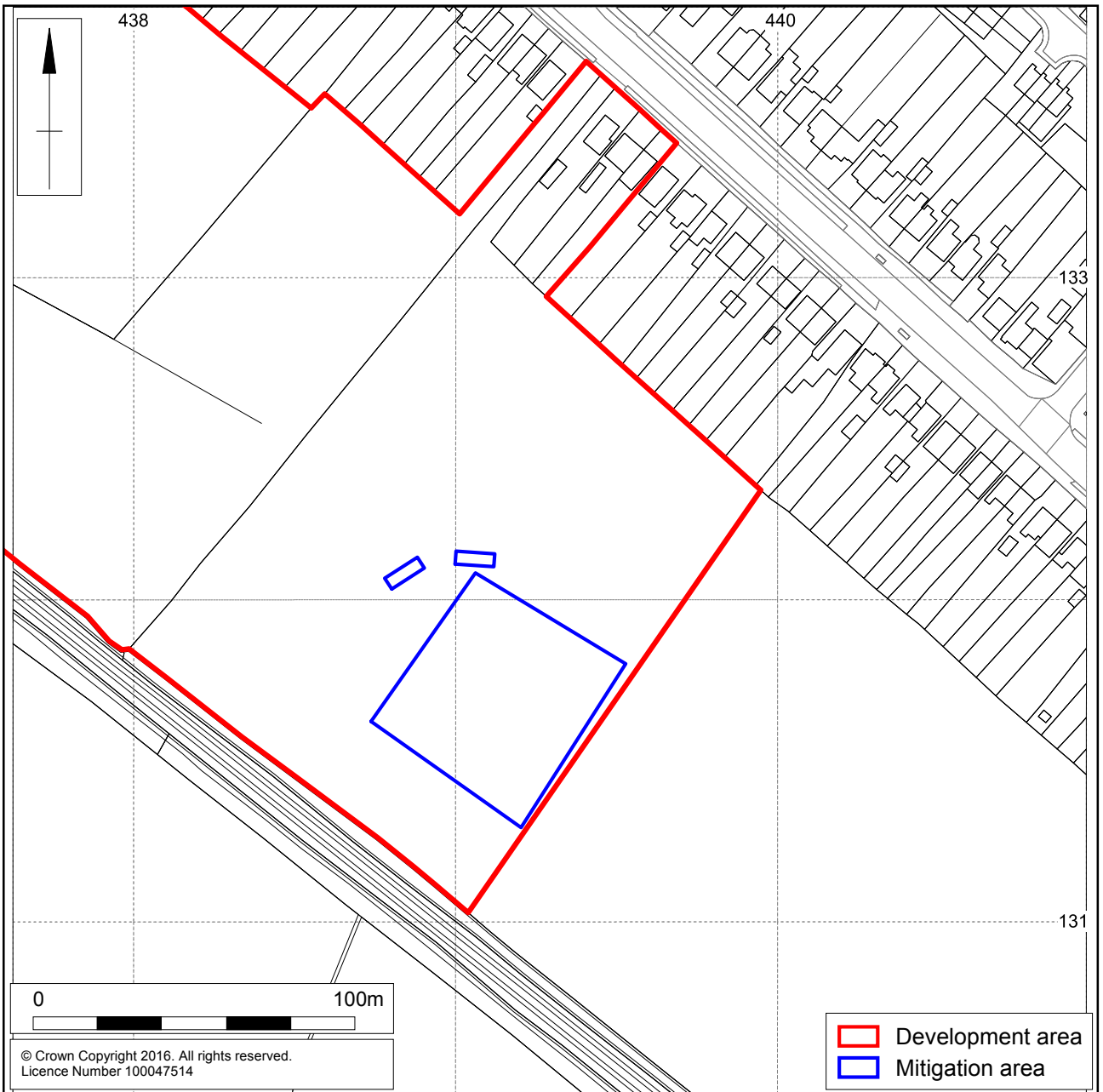
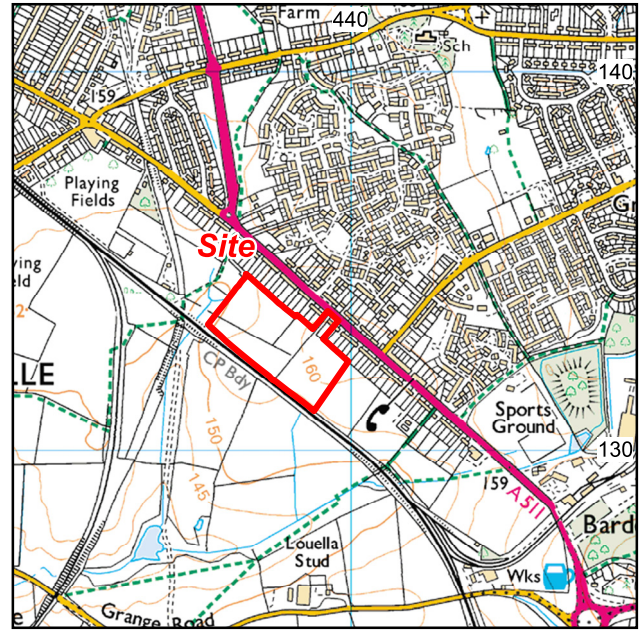
The mitigation followed on from previous works at the site, including a fieldwalking survey, geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation (Fisher 2015, Muldowney and Chinnock 2015). The mitigation was intended to fulfil the requirements set out by Richard Clark, Leicestershire County Council Principal Planning Archaeologist (LCCPPA) and was undertaken in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012). The requirements and methodology were outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by MOLA (MOLA 2016).

MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Registered Organisation, and all works were undertaken according to the CIfA *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a). The mitigation work conformed with current best archaeological practice as defined in the CIfA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (CIfA 2014b) and the procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015).

## 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Location and geology

The development area is located to the east of the town of Coalville in Leicestershire, and at the rear of houses facing onto the A511 Bardon Road. The development area comprises four fields, totalling c.6.18ha in area, and is bounded to the north-east by the curtilages of Bardon Road properties. Aligned parallel to Bardon Road, and bounding the site to the south-west, is a freight railway line running from Bardon Hill quarry to the south-east. To the south-east and north-west, the site is bounded by agricultural fields, hedgerows, and a field drain. The mitigation works were focussed on a small area in the east of the site.



Scale 1:2000

Site location and mitigation area Fig 1

The site straddles a low ridge, aligned south-west to north-east, lying at c.155-160m aOD with shallow valleys to east and west. The lowest ground is at the south-east and west corners of the development area.

The underlying geology of the site is formed of Gunthorpe Member sedimentary mudstone, overlaid by superficial deposits of Oadby Diamiction Member. This latter type contains Cretaceous and Jurassic rock fragments with subordinate lenses of sand, gravel, clay and silt. A narrow band of alluvial deposits lie down the west hand side of the site, in the area where the small watercourse is to be found (BGS 2015).

## **2.2 Archaeological and historical background**

A number of evaluations have been undertaken on the site in advance of the implementation of the mitigation strategy. These are discussed below. An Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment (henceforth the DBA), utilising the resources of the Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire, was prepared by the Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) (Thomas 2013). The following historical background is summarised from that document.

Until recent archaeological evaluation works, no designated heritage assets were known to exist within the development area. One spot find is recorded in the HER from within the site, a Neolithic flint knife blade (MLE7288). Significant archaeological and historic activity is known from the vicinity of the site, with eight listed buildings and forty HER points to be found within and around a 1km radius of the proposed development site. The closest designated heritage asset is the Grade II Listed Christ Church, c.750m to the north-west (MLE14487).

In consideration of the same record, the site was thought to have a moderate to high potential to contain significant buried archaeological remains, particularly from the Neolithic to Bronze Age period.

### ***Prehistoric***

The single findspot from within the proposed development site comprises a plano-convex flint knife of late Neolithic date (MLE7288). The exact find location is not precisely known. Other prehistoric activity is known from the vicinity, with Mesolithic flints found to the south-west of the site, and Neolithic axes to the east and to the north. Previous archaeological fieldwalking surveys around half a kilometre to the south of the site have also produced large quantities of Neolithic/Bronze Age flints. This complies with a general trend of extensive prehistoric activity in Leicestershire from the 5th to 2nd millennium BC.

### ***Romano-British***

Romano-British activity is known to have been reasonably extensive in the East Midlands area. Bardon Road may have its origins as a Roman road, with possible patches of the Roman surface surviving. Settlement evidence is suggested by the reported discovery of mosaic flooring c.1km to the north-west of Bardon Road. Some Roman coins have been found in the Coalville region.

### ***Saxon and medieval***

No evidence of Anglo-Saxon and medieval activity is known from the development site. Some medieval settlement is known from the vicinity, including the medieval village of Hugglescote about a kilometre to the south. Associated with the village is the demolished church of St James. A medieval deer park can be found c.1.5km to



the east, and medieval ceramics were recovered from archaeological excavation just over half a kilometre to the south. It seems likely that the fields were part of the open field system in the medieval period, probably belonging to Hugglescote village. East-west aligned ridge and furrow could be identified from aerial photographs in fields to the south-west of the site.

### ***Post-medieval and modern***

There are no post-medieval, Victorian or modern heritage assets known from within the application site. The settlement of Coalville, around 1km to the north-west of the site, has mid-19th-century origins and began to develop along with its coal industry after 1824. Two collieries were operated in the near vicinity. The area to the south and west of the site is also crossed by railway works. The former Leicester to Swannington railway and the Ashby & Nuneaton Joint Railway both run along the boundaries of the site. The former of these is still in operation as a freight line for the nearby granite quarry.

During these periods, the site is considered to have been likely to have retained its agricultural function. Historic mapping and aerial photographs show that the easternmost field of the site was under allotments by 1903. The row of houses along Bardon Road was completed by 1948, and the allotments fell out of use sometime before 1963.

## **2.3 Previous archaeological work**

Several programmes of archaeological work have previously been undertaken in the near vicinity of the site. A scatter of pits, ditches, field boundaries and other features were identified to the south of the development site by geophysical surveys in 2000, 2010 and 2012. In 2011 an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out up to the southern boundary of the current proposed development site. Medieval or later plough furrows were identified, along with an earlier ditch and three probable post-medieval field boundaries.

A small archaeological evaluation near Hugglescote identified an undated posthole and feature, and a few sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery. To the north of the application site, a c.8ha area was examined by geophysical survey (Simmonds 2009). One possible ditch and evidence for ridge and furrow were identified. However, the large-scale dumping of coal waste on the site prevented further survey.

Fieldwalking events around the area have recovered material from most periods between the Neolithic and the 18th century.

A number of surveys on the site were undertaken in 2015 in order to inform the implementation of mitigation strategy. This included a geophysical survey (Fisher 2015), a fieldwalking survey and trial trench evaluation (Muldowney and Chinnock 2015). The geophysical survey indicated that undefined curvilinear anomalies may be present in the eastern half of the site. The trial trench evaluation works identified a truncated urned cremation burial, possibly dating to the middle Bronze Age and a curvilinear gully, possibly part of a roundhouse ring-gully of the middle-late Iron Age. These features were found in the south-eastern field and were the focus of the current mitigation work.

### 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the work was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of the archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The general aims of the investigation are to:

- Mitigate the potential impacts from the development of the site through archaeological recording, analysis and dissemination;
- Refine the date, nature, character and extent of the activity on the development site;
- Recovering artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- Recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine past local environmental conditions;
- Creating an organised and indexed site archive;
- Analyse, interpret and report on the findings from the fieldwork.

Specific research objectives will be drawn from national and regional research frameworks documents (Cooper 2006; Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012) and will be used to enhance our understanding of the Bronze Age and Iron Age activity on the site (see section 6).

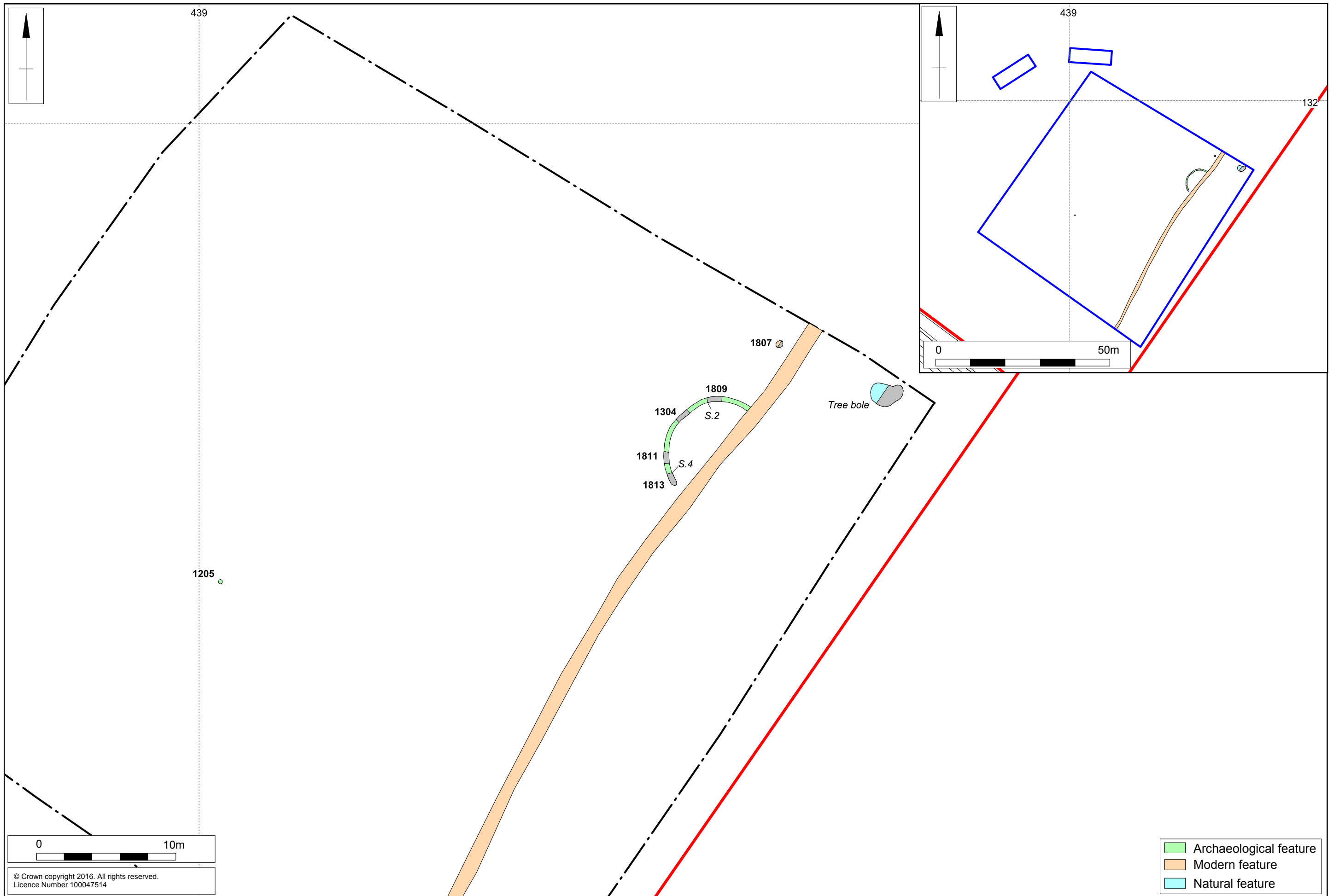
### 4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Upon instruction by the LCCPPA, two trial trenches, measuring 12m long by 4m wide, were excavated to investigate a possible anomaly in geophysical data that may have indicated the presence of a ring-ditch. In order to avoid confusion with the records from the evaluation work, the new trenches were numbered 16 and 17. An additional area measuring 0.31ha was excavated in order to examine the area containing the possible ring gully and truncated cremation burial (Fig 2). The open-area and trenches were excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil was removed under archaeological direction to reveal archaeological features or natural substrate. The trial trenches were backfilled with their up-cast material and were then compacted by the mechanical excavator. All procedures complied with MOLA Health and Safety provisions and MOLA Health and Safety at Work Guidelines (MOLA 2014).

All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the excavation were fully recorded, following standard MOLA procedures (MOLA 2014). All deposits were given a separate context number in a sequence assigned to each trench. They were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation.

All trench locations were recorded using Leica Viva Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of  $\pm 0.05\text{m}$ . A full digital photographic record was maintained. The field data from the evaluation has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

The evaluation conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (CIfA 2014b). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with Historic England, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (HE 2015) and the WSI (MOLA 2016).



Scale 1:250 (A3), 1:1000 (Inset)

Plan of excavated features Fig 2

## 5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

### 5.1 Summary of site chronology

The archaeological remains comprised a cremation burial, a curvilinear ditch, a rectilinear ditch and a barrel. Two periods of activity were identified:

Period 1: Middle Bronze Age (c.1500BC – c.1100BC)

Period 2: Modern (1800AD – present)

The remains from Period 1 comprised a single urned cremation deposit. Period 2 was represented by a rectilinear field boundary and the remains of a barrel.

### 5.2 Period 1: Middle Bronze Age funerary activity (c.1500BC – c.1100BC)

Activity at the site appears to have commenced in the middle Bronze Age, with the placement of an isolated urned cremation deposit.

The cremation deposit [1205] was set into a small circular pit 0.05m deep and 0.15m wide. Only the base of the cremation urn, (1204), remained, the upper part having been truncated by ploughing (Fig 3). The urn was filled with friable mid brown-grey sandy silt with occasional fragments of charcoal and cremated human bone (1203).



Cremation burial [1205], plan view Fig 3

#### The cremation deposit by Andy Chapman

The truncated base of an urn [1204] contained a remnant of a cremation deposit (1203) comprising white calcined bone and charcoal in friable grey-brown soil, suggesting that a mixed deposit of bone and pyre debris had been deposited in the urn. The recovered material comprised 1.9g of bone and 0.6g of wood charcoal.

The flat base of the urn is 160mm in diameter and 19mm thick, with the lower walls of a similar thickness. The fabric contains frequent angular flint inclusions and has a dark grey core and inner surface, and an orange-brown external surface. The vessel was poorly fired, with the base fragmenting on lifting.

It is most likely that this was an urned cremation burial dating to the middle Bronze Age.

**5.3 Period 2: Modern agricultural activity (1800 – present)**

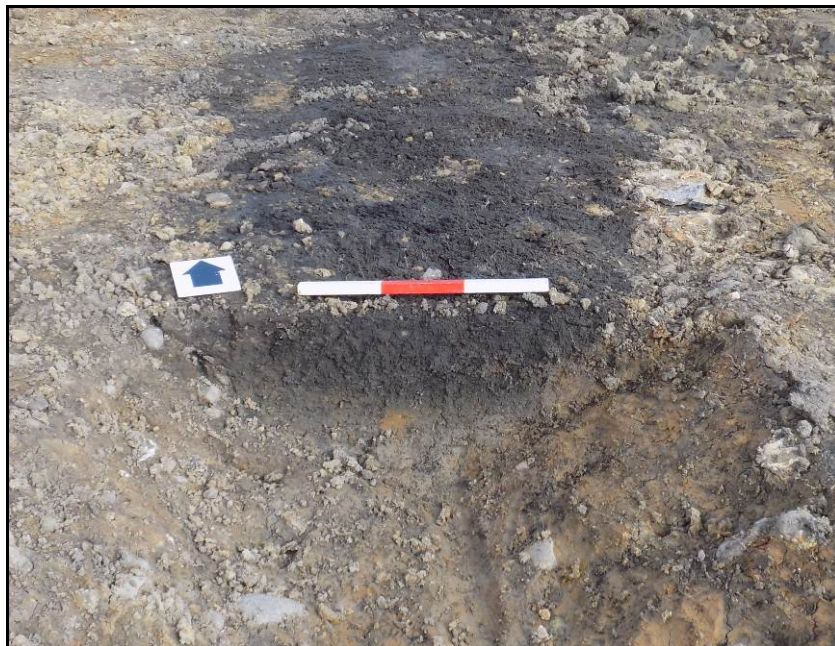
No further datable activity was present at the site until the post-medieval period. A ditch and the remains of a barrel were identified.

The remains of the barrel [1807] had straight sides and a flat base, and measured 0.15m deep and 0.60m in diameter. Coal fragments, 20th-century glass and the remains of two iron rings (finds not retained) were recovered from its fill (Fig 4).



Barrel [1807] partially and fully excavated, looking west and south-west Fig 4

The ditch, aligned north-east to south-west, was more than 100m long and followed the slope of the land. It was probably a field boundary and was located approximately 2m to the east of the remains of the barrel. It had a shallow, irregular profile measuring 0.50m wide and 0.15m deep, and contained modern brick and tile (Fig 5).



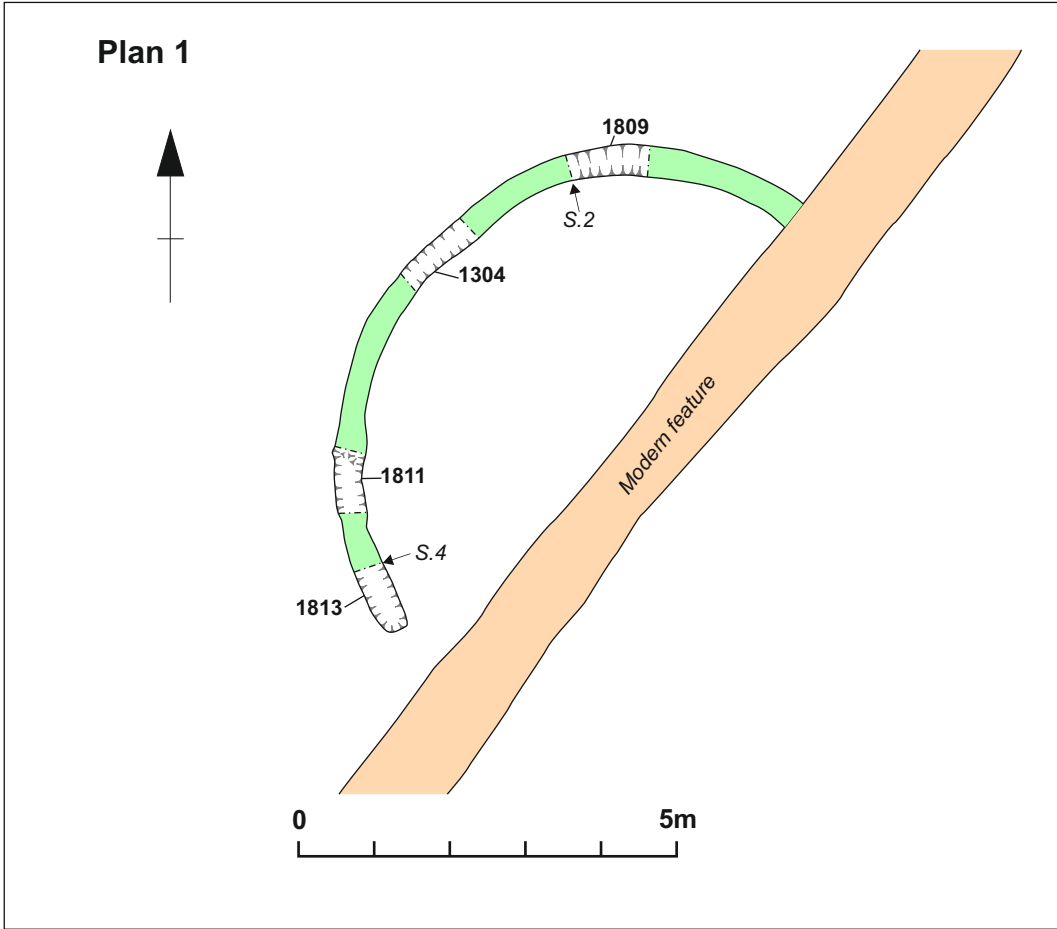
Modern linear feature, looking north Fig 5

**5.4 Undated curvilinear ditch**

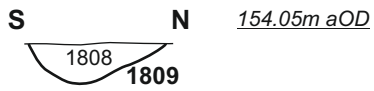
There was a single curvilinear ditch, which formed a “C shape” and was aligned approximately NE-SW. It was severely truncated on its eastern side by a more recent hedgerow but approximately 15m of its length was visible, including a terminal, which may indicate that it had a south-east facing opening. The profiles suggested that it had been severely impacted by root action or animal burrowing (Figs 6 and 7). No finds were recovered from the feature.



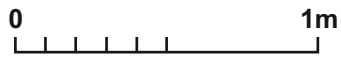
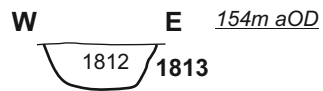
Ditch slot [1811] looking north Fig 6



**Section 2**



**Section 4**



## 6 DISCUSSION

### Overview

Two periods of activity have been identified at the site, dating to the middle Bronze Age and modern periods.

During the middle Bronze Age a single cremation deposit was buried at the site and evidence suggests that the site saw no further use until the modern period, when it was used as allotment gardens.

### **Research agendas**

No specific research agendas were highlighted after the evaluation, but it is now possible to determine that the identified remains can contribute to the following (Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012):

#### Middle Bronze Age

- *The nature of Neolithic and Bronze Age societies*

#### Modern

- *Addressing settlement expansion beyond historic cores and fringe location of industries and associated housing*
- *Evaluating ownership of land and plots within settlements*

### **The Middle Bronze Age funerary activity**

The identification of a single urned cremation burial is the only clear evidence of middle Bronze Age period activity at the site, although it is likely that plough damage has removed other remains. Flat cremation cemeteries have been identified in other parts of Leicestershire and the wider East Midlands, including at Eye Kettleby near Melton Mowbray, which is one of the largest known examples in Britain (Finn 2011, Clay 2006, 83). The cremation cemetery at Eye Kettleby contained more than 80 cremations, 30 in urns, and was also located in close proximity to earlier Bronze Age ring ditches. It is not possible to provide a date for the curvilinear ditch found at the Bardon Road site, but it was located c.30m from the cremation and it is possible that a similar sequence of events occurred at Bardon Road, though on a smaller scale.

Although the quality of preservation at the site was limited, the Bronze Age period remains can still contribute to the wider corpus of known sites and may help to further our understanding of social and burial practices in Bronze Age Leicestershire.

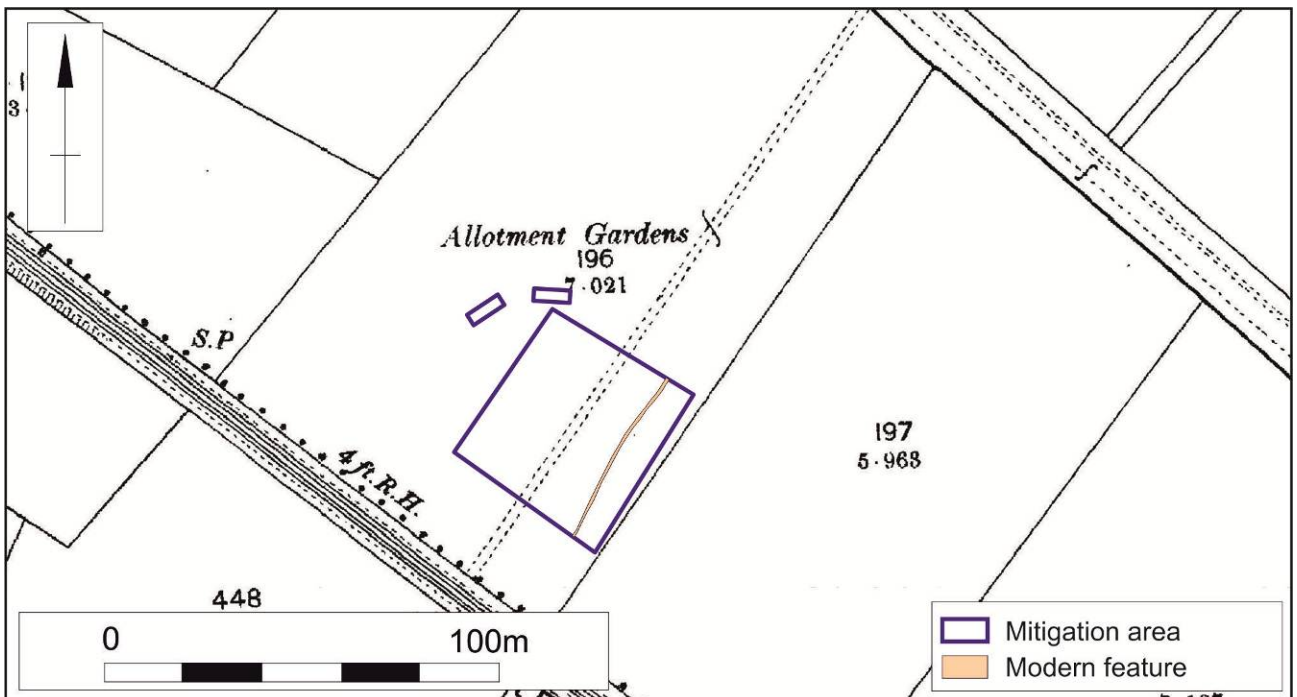
### **The modern agricultural activity**

There is no archaeological evidence to suggest that any further activity took place at the site until the modern period. Historic maps suggest that at some time between 1883 and 1903 the site was converted to allotments and residential development to the north of Bardon Road began to develop at some point before 1929. The north-east to south-west aligned ditch that was identified during the mitigation work runs parallel to the field boundaries, and also to the footpath that is visible on the 1903 Ordnance Survey map. It was presumably dug for drainage purposes, or to separate plots (Fig 8). The remains of the barrel appear to date to the 20th century and also probably relate to this period of land use, perhaps as a water-butt for allotment irrigation.



There is potential for the remains to further our understanding of the way in which the settlement expanded beyond the core of Coalville. The site lies in an area of known post-medieval expansion and at a time when the area to the east of Coalville was utilised for agricultural purposes, this field in particular was chosen as the location for allotment gardens. This period of land use pre-dates the construction of the suburb at Waterworks Road, which lies directly to the other side of Bardon Road and whose development was presumably linked to the expansion of the Bardon Hill Quarry.

The modern agricultural remains from Bardon Road also add further character to the historical records that exist for the location and provide demonstrable evidence of the way that the land was sub-divided and utilised as allotments.



1903 OS map with mitigation area overlain (Scale 1:2500) Fig 8

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MOLA Northampton  
03 June 2016

**APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
1203	Fill of (1204)	Friable mid brown-grey sandy silt with occasional pieces of charcoal and cremated human bone throughout.	0.13m wide, 0.04m thick	Cremated human bone, Sample 1
1204	Cremation vessel	Truncated base of pottery urn	0.15m wide, 0.05m deep	Pottery
[1205]	Pit	Shallow sub-circular pit.	0.15m wide, 0.05m deep	-
1303	Fill of [1304]	Friable mid brown-grey clay silt with charcoal flecks and occasional small sub-rounded stones throughout.	0.31m wide, 0.12m thick	-
[1304]	Ditch	Curvilinear ditch with steep-sided U-shaped profile and concave base.	0.31m wide, 0.12m thick	-
1804	Fill of [1805]	Friable dark black-brown sandy silt with frequent small to medium-sized stones.	0.60m wide 0.15m thick	-
[1805]	Tree throw	Irregular circular feature with moderately sloped irregular/ root disturbed sides.	1.80m wide 0.45m deep	-
1806	Fill of [1807]	Friable-firm dark brown-black sandy silt with infrequent small stones, wood remains, coal flecks.	0.59m diameter 0.15m thick	Modern glass, coal and iron rings (not retained)
[1807]	Pit	Circular cut with vertical sides and uneven base.	0.59m diameter 0.15m deep	-
1808	Fill of [1809]	Friable-loose mid grey silty sand with occasional small stones.	0.45m wide 0.13m thick	-
[1809]	Ring gully	Curvilinear feature, slot taken at point where alignment of feature was east to west. Feature had moderately sloped sides and uneven bioturbated base.	0.45m wide 0.13m deep	-
1810	Fill of [1811]	Friable mid grey silty sand with occasional small to medium sized stones.	0.50m wide 0.10m thick	-
[1811]	Ring gully	Curvilinear feature, slot taken at point where alignment of feature was north to south. Feature has moderately sloped sides and uneven, bioturbated base.	0.50m wide 0.10m thick	-
1812	Fill of [1813]	Friable mid grey silty sand with occasional small stones.	0.38m wide 0.15m deep	-
[1813]	Ring gully	Curvilinear feature, slot taken at point where alignment of feature was north to south. Feature had moderately sloped sides and uneven base.	0.38m wide 0.15m deep	-



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