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**An Archaeological Evaluation
at Sites 1 & 4, Stonton Catchment,
Rolleston & Skeffington, Leicestershire
(SK 73 02)**




Roger Kipling

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at Sites 1 & 4, Stonton Catchment,
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Leicestershire
(NGR: SK 73 02)**

Roger Kipling

For: The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

<p>Checked by Project Manager</p> <p>Signed: </p> <p>Date: 13/05/2013</p> <p>Name: Patrick Clay</p>
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**University of Leicester
Archaeological Services**
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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[NGR: SK 73 02]**

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Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken in April 2013 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust. The fieldwork was undertaken as a preliminary evaluation prior to the excavation of a series of wildlife ponds in the Stonton Catchment in Rolleston and Skeffington parishes, in order to assess the potential impact of the development on any archaeological remains as may have been present. The archaeological evaluation at Rolleston and Skeffington revealed considerable depths of alluvium but produced no evidence of archaeological activity, either in artefactual or structural terms.

The site archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A44. 2013.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at two locations (Sites 1 & 4) in the Skeffington and Rolleston parishes, Leicestershire. The proposed works were known to fall within an area with the potential for the presence of archaeological remains, notably dating to the Roman and prehistoric periods. The course of a Roman road is believed to run to the west of Rolleston and evidence of Roman and Iron Age settlements has been found in the vicinity, and there have been recorded finds of prehistoric worked flint implements within the area. In addition, some of the proposed works lie within valleys deemed to have potential for the survival of palaeo-environmental evidence.

In consequence the Senior Planning Archaeologist (PPA), Historic & Natural Environment Team (HNET), Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to the planning authority, recommended the need for archaeological investigation comprising a programme of evaluation trenching. The investigation was required in order to provide an adequate sample of the proposed areas for new ponds and to

assess the likely archaeological impact of the proposals. The agreed scheme was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; ULAS 2013). The fieldwork specified was intended to provide further indications of the character and extent of any buried archaeological remains in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains might be assessed. Fieldwork was carried out in April 2013 and involved the machine excavation of thirteen trial trenches in order to provide the 2% sample of the development area stipulated in the brief.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG March 2012). All archaeological work was in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct (2010) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008). The LCC *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland* (1997) was also adhered to.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The proposed development site (SK 73 02) is located in the triangle of land defined by the villages of Billesdon, Rolleston and Skeffington, south of the A47 (Fig. 1). The site comprises several valley bottom site locations currently under pasture. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 169 indicates that the underlying geology of the site is likely to consist of deposits of Glaciofluvial Deposits, Mid Pleistocene - Sand and Gravel. The site varies in height of around 110m OD at the north end of the site.



Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

Reproduced from the Landranger 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495

Aims and Objectives

The archaeological evaluation was deemed to have the potential to contribute a number of period-specific research aims, namely:

Mesolithic (Myers 2006; Knight et al 2012, English Heritage 2010)

The exploitation of stream side locations during the Mesolithic (Myers 2006). Palaeoenvironmental evidence could provide information on land use.

Neolithic and Early Middle Bronze Age (Clay 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2010)

The development of ceremonial monuments and their environs – the e contains several prehistoric ceremonial landscapes and the scheme may uncover archaeological assets associated with these. Palaeoenvironmental evidence may provide information on agricultural practices and land use.

Late Iron Age (Willis 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2010)

There are Iron Age settlements in the vicinity of the scheme. Information on the sequence and chronology of settlements may be recovered and palaeoenvironmental evidence could provide information on agricultural practices and land use. Artefacts can provide evidence for evidence for craft industry and exchange across broad landscape areas.

The Roman Period (Taylor 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2012)

There are several Roman sites within the study area including enclosures and a Roman road. The evaluations may contribute to knowledge on Iron Age – Roman transitions in rural settlement, landscape and society. Artefacts may identify trade links and economy.

The general aims of the evaluation were as follows:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development site
- To assess vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed remains
- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of the proposed development to be assessed
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site
- To inform a strategy to avoid or mitigate impacts of the proposed development on surviving archaeological remains
- To produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Leicestershire HER.

Specific evaluation aims are to:-

- Seek to establish the nature of the geophysical anomalies and to determine if they are of archaeological significance

The results of the evaluation will enable reasoned and informed recommendations to be made to the local planning authority and, if appropriate, a suitable mitigation strategy for the proposed development to be formulated.

This specification conforms to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). It has been designed in accordance with current best archaeological practice and the appropriate national standards and guidelines including:

- *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991);
- *Model Briefs and Specifications for Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations* (Association of County Archaeological Officers, 1994);
- *Code of Conduct* (Institute for Archaeologists, 2010);
- *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Institute for Archaeologists, 2010);
- *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Association of Local Government Officers, 2003);
- *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicestershire County Council 1997)

Methodology

Archaeological Trial Trench and Auger Methodology

Prior to the commencement of works an Accession Code was obtained and the required archive deposition forms completed. An OASIS online record was initiated and the key fields completed on Details, Location and Creator forms.

Following recommendations from the Principal Planning Archaeologist (PPA), Historic & Natural Environment Team (HNET), Leicestershire County Council, a programme of evaluation trenching and augering was outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation document, comprising:

Site 1 Skeffington SK 7338 0189 (centre)

- Circa 240m² of trenching, the equivalent of five 30m x 1.6m trenches was proposed.

Site 2 Rolleston/Skeffington SK 7403 0119(centre)

- Circa 335m² of trenching, the equivalent of seven 30m x 1.6m trenches and seven 1.6 m square test pits was proposed.
- Five auger transects were proposed in each transect comprising three auger samples to a depth of c.2m.

Site 3 Proposal withdrawn

Site 4 Skeffington SK 7439 0098(centre)

- Circa 680m² of trenching and test pitting, the equivalent of eight 30m x 1.6m trenches.
- Four auger transects were proposed for each area comprising three auger samples to a depth of c.2m.

In the event, Site 2 was withdrawn from the ponds scheme proposal, and the northern sector of Site 4 will be the subject of archaeological investigation at a future date, subject to confirmation.

All evaluation trenches were excavated to a minimum depth of 1.5m, the formation level for the proposed ponds. In view of this the augering to provide environmental information in Area 4 was no longer necessary as the full depth of the proposals was revealed in the trench sections and samples could be taken as appropriate.

Topsoil and overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (*c.*1.8m wide), under archaeological supervision. The spoil generated during the evaluation was mounded away from the edges of each trench. Topsoil and subsoil was stored separately. Mechanical excavation ceased at undisturbed natural deposits.

The trenches were recorded at an appropriate scale by measured drawing and photography and were located to Ordnance Survey National Grid. A photographic record, utilising black and white negative film, supplemented by high resolution digital data capture, was maintained during the course of the fieldwork and included:

- the site prior to commencement of fieldwork;
- the site during work, showing specific stages of fieldwork;

Upon completion of the evaluation trenching, the excavated trenches were backfilled and compacted.



Figure 2: Water Friendly Farming Project: proposed pond locations; scale 1:17500

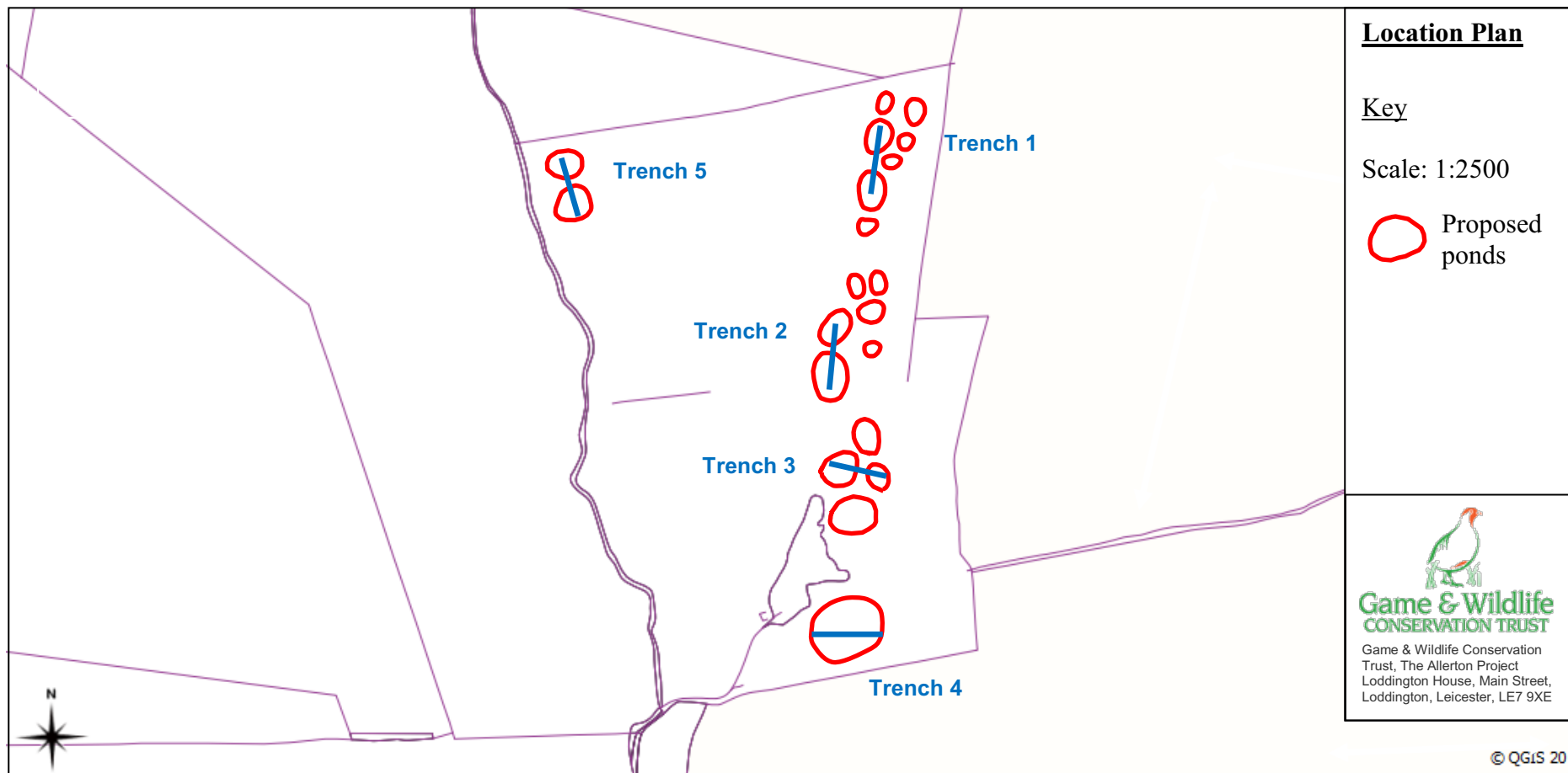


Figure 3: Site 1 location plan, showing trenches

Results

Site 1

Site 1 was located in an area of woodland to the west of Skeffington and consisted of five 30m x 1.9m trenches, located in order to target the locations of the proposed wildlife ponds (Figure 3). **Trench 1**, aligned north-south and measuring between 0.56m and 0.94m in depth, was characterised by 0.20m-0.32m of dark grey sandy clay loam topsoil overlying a thin (0.14m-0.30m) mid grey-brown silty clay subsoil (Figure 4). This in turn overlay a 0.20m-0.30m thick richly organic silty clay alluvial deposit above a yellow-brown natural clay.

Trenches 2 and 3 produced a comparable sequence of topsoil and subsoil overlying 0.50m-0.60m of grey-brown silty clay alluvial material above natural river gravels.



Figure 4: Site 1, Trench 1: view south (2m scale)

Trench 4, located to the south of the Trenches 1-3, revealed very deep alluvial deposits of over 1m depth (Figure 5, Figure 6); a test sondage to 2.6m depth failed to reach natural clay.



Figure 5: Site 1, Trench 4: view west (2m scale)



Figure 6: Typical alluvial sequence (Site 1, Trench 4); view looking south-west (2m scale)

Trench 5, located on higher ground to the north-west, again revealed 0.15m-0.25m of topsoil and 0.15m-0.60m of subsoil overlying a thinner (0.30m-0.65m) accumulation of alluvium above clean blue-grey natural clay and sands and gravels. None of the five trenches produced any archaeological evidence.

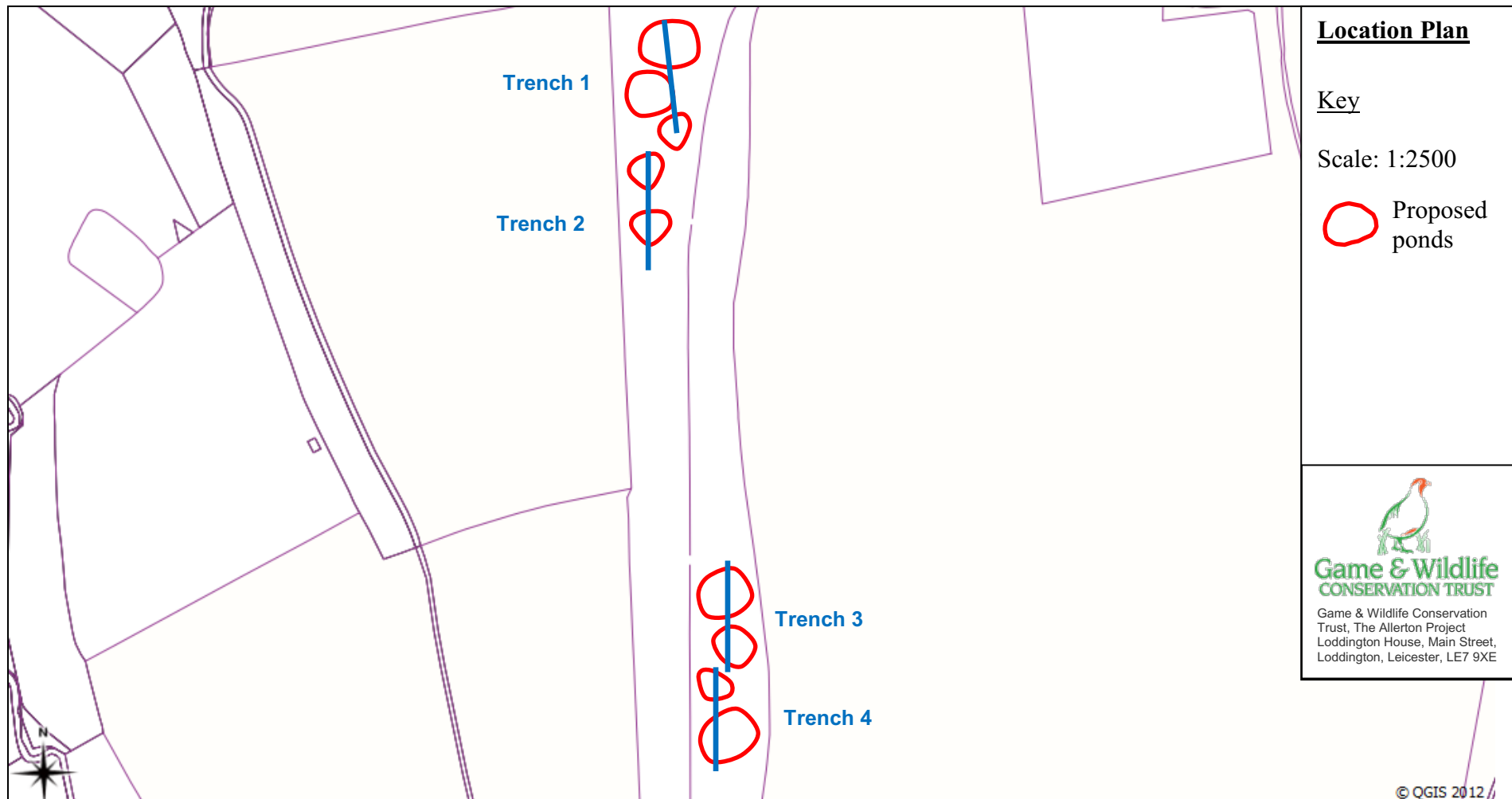


Figure 7: Site 4 (south) location plan, showing trenches

Site 4 (south)

Site 4 (south), was located south of Skeffington in a steep-sided valley of pasture and woodland, and consisted of four 30m x 1.90m trenches again targeting proposed pond locations. All four trenches produced the same sequence of a thin topsoil and subsoil overlying deep alluvial deposits. In lieu of augering, test mechanical excavation in Trench 1 (**Error! Reference source not found.**) revealed alluvium to a depth of at least 1.90m below present ground level, or 0.40m below pond formation depth. Consequently, and in part for safety reasons due to the risk of trench flooding and collapse, the remainder of the machine excavation was restricted to 1.50m maximum depth.



Figure 8: Site 4 (south) Trench 4, view south; 2m scale

TRENCH	SITE	ORIENTATION	DIMENSIONS (metres)	DESCRIPTION	DEPTH (MIN-MAX metres)
1	1	N-S	30 x 1.90	Topsoil 0.20-0.32m, subsoil 0.14-0.3m, alluvium 0.10-0.40m+. No archaeological finds or features.	0.56-0.94
2	1	N-S	30 x 1.90	Topsoil 0.35m, subsoil 0.20m, alluvium 0.50m+. No archaeological finds or features.	1.05
3	1	E-W	30 x 1.90	Topsoil 0.29m, subsoil 0.26m, alluvium 0.73m+. No archaeological finds or features.	1.88-2.00
4	1	E-W	30 x 1.90	Topsoil 0.15-0.23m, subsoil 0.10-0.30m, alluvium 1.93m+. No archaeological finds or deposits.	1.90-2.40
5	1	N-S	30 x 1.90	Topsoil 0.15-0.25m, subsoil 0.15-0.60m, alluvium 0.46-1.65m+. No archaeological finds or deposits.	1.01-2.00
1	4 south	N-S	30 x 1.90	Topsoil 0.25m, subsoil 0.30m, alluvium 0.75-1.05m+. No archaeological finds or deposits.	1.30-1.90
2	4 south	N-S	30 x 1.90	Topsoil 0.26m, subsoil 0.18m, alluvium 0.12-1.31m+. Possible pit.	0.56-1.75
3	4 south	N-S	30 x 1.90	Topsoil 0.16-0.20m, subsoil 0.16-0.23m, alluvium 0.88-1.18m+. No archaeological finds or deposits.	1.12-1.50
4	4 south	N-S	30 x 1.90	Topsoil 0.17-0.26m, subsoil 0.17-0.22m, alluvium 0.59-1.12m+. No archaeological finds or deposits.	0.72-1.52

Figure 9: Trench table

Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation at Stonton Catchment, Rolleston and Skeffington parishes, produced no artefactual or structural evidence of archaeological activity. A sequence of alluvium, typical of stream side locations was revealed. In consultation with the Environmental Officer the potential for environmental evidence to be present was deemed to be high in view of the presence of waterlogged organic deposits within the alluvium. However in the absence of cultural material this was not sampled or analysed at this stage. If further work was undertaken however and associated cultural material revealed the potential for environmental evidence would be of some significance.

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A44.2013), consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service.

The archive consists of:

- 13 trench recording sheets
- Photographic record indices
- 27 digital photographs
- A risk assessment form

Publication

A version of the excavation summary (see above) will appear in due course in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire and Rutland Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Acknowledgements

Roger Kipling and Steve Baker of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of The Game and Wildlife Conservancy Trust. The project was managed by Patrick Clay.

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Oasis Information

Project Name	Land at Sites 1 & 2, Stonton Cathment, Rolleston, Skeffington, Leicestershire
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Roger Kipling
Previous/Future work	Development (wildlife ponds)
Current Land Use	Agricultural
Development Type	Wildlife ponds
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-application
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK 73 02
Start/end dates of field work	April 2013
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	3.24ha.

Roger Kipling
ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel:0116 252 2836
Fax: 0116 252 2614

Email: rwk1@le.ac.uk

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Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay
University of Leicester Archaeological
Services (ULAS)
University of Leicester,
University Road,
Leicester LE1 7RH

T: +44 (0)116 252 2848

F: +44 (0)116 252 2614

E: ulas@le.ac.uk

w: www.le.ac.uk/ulas



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