



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation
on Land at Twycross Road,
Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire
(SK 3285 0178)**




Roger Kipling

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**An Archaeological Evaluation on
Land at Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna,
Leicestershire
(SK 3285 0178)**

Roger Kipling

For: Springbourne Homes

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An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire (SP 473 757)

Roger Kipling

Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken in June 2013 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Springbourne Homes on land at Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire. The fieldwork was undertaken following the submission of a planning application for the construction of a residential development in order to assess the potential impact of the development on any archaeological remains as may have been present.

The archaeological evaluation on land at Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire, produced evidence for medieval occupation in the form of pits and ditches dating to the early 12th to mid-14th centuries and likely to represent activity to the rear of properties fronting Twycross Road immediately to the east. The recent work reflects the findings from previous fieldwork undertaken by ULAS adjacent to the site in 2002-3 on the road frontage.

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A78.2013.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire in response to a proposed planning application for residential development in June 2013. In consequence Leicestershire County Council, acting in its role as advisor to the Local Planning Authority, recommended the need for a preliminary phase of archaeological investigation comprising a programme of evaluation trenching. The investigation was required in order to provide an adequate sample of the development area and to assess the likely archaeological impact of the development proposals. The agreed scheme was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (ULAS 2013). The work was commissioned by Hayward Architects on behalf of Springbourne Homes.

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 June 2013 and involved the machine excavation of seven 30m x 1.9m trenches, totalling 400m² in order to provide the c.5% of the area identified for archaeological evaluative works. The trenches were positioned in order to target the locations of the proposed buildings.

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 3285 0178) is located to the north-west of the village of Sheepy Magna on land west of Twycross Road (Fig. 1). The site comprises two rectangular areas measuring c.0.83 hectares in total, the northern area currently an abandoned garden while that to the south was under pasture.

The underlying geology comprised deposits of river terrace sands and gravels Lower Lias (http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discovering_Geology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html). The site is on effectively flat land at a height of c.75m O.D. and appears to be the original topography.

Archaeological and Historical Background

An archaeological evaluation undertaken by ULAS in 2002-3 adjacent to the present site on the Twycross Road frontage identified yard surfaces, pits, postholes, possible wall footings, and other structures and ditches. These features, including timber and stone buildings, produced pottery of medieval date, predominantly 12th-14th century, and likely represent frontage occupation of a domestic nature alongside the road, and just to the north of surviving ponds of presumed medieval date (Jarvis 2003). Twycross Road was historically a turnpike road and later provided a trade route for the East Midlands coalfields (TLAHS 78 (2004), 171).

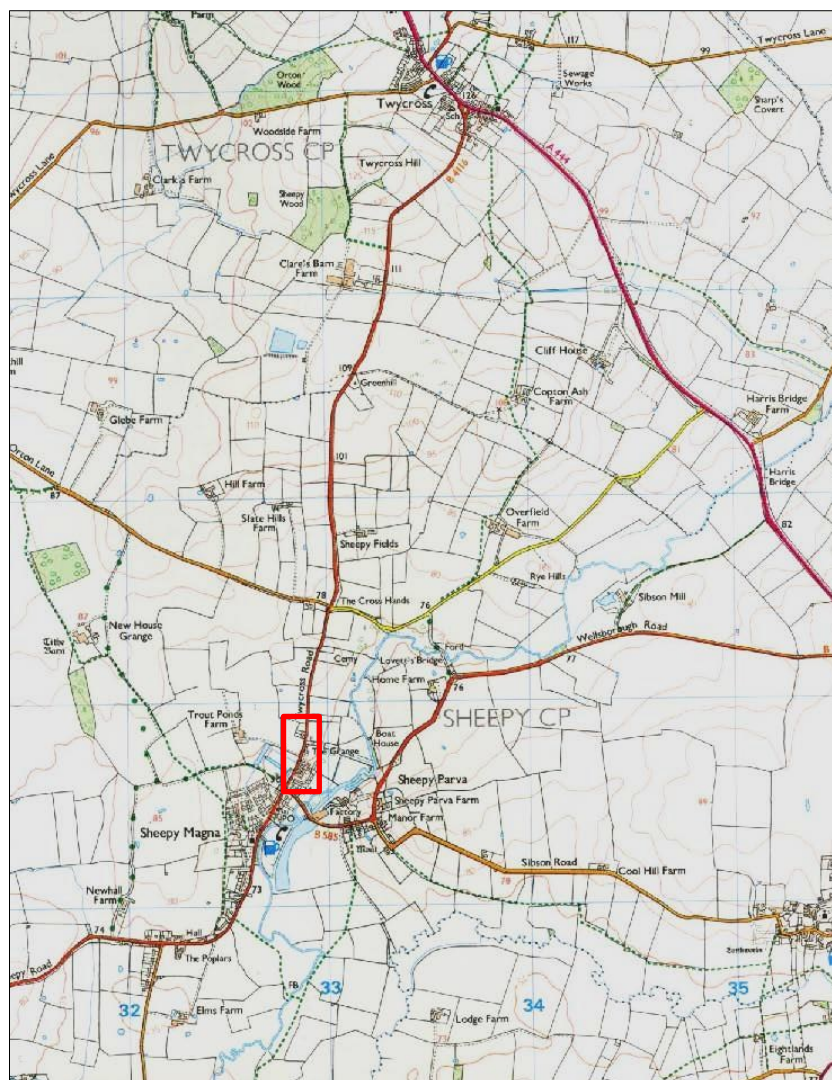


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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Aims and Objectives

The fieldwork had the potential to address the following research aims.

Medieval (Lewis 2006; Knight et al 2012)

The area lies close to the site of known medieval deposits and may contribute to the study of rural medieval settlement and East Midlands Research Strategy 6.7.7.2 (Knight et al 2012, 94; Lewis 2006).

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 were 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);
- *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicestershire County Council 1997)

Methodology

Archaeological Trial Trenches

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 Senior Planning Archaeologist (SPA) of Leicestershire County Council, as advisors to the planning authority, a programme of evaluation trenching was undertaken.

It was proposed that *c.*400m² of trenching, the equivalent of seven trial trenches, each measuring 30m x 1.9m, be excavated in order to cover the 5% sample required by the brief.

Topsoil and overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (*c.*1.9m 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 GPS-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 loosely compacted.

Results

As set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (ULAS 2013), 400m² of archaeological trial trenches, comprising seven trenches measuring 30m in length and *c.*1.9m wide, were excavated.

Excavation was undertaken using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.9m wide toothless ditching bucket, with topsoil and overburden removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

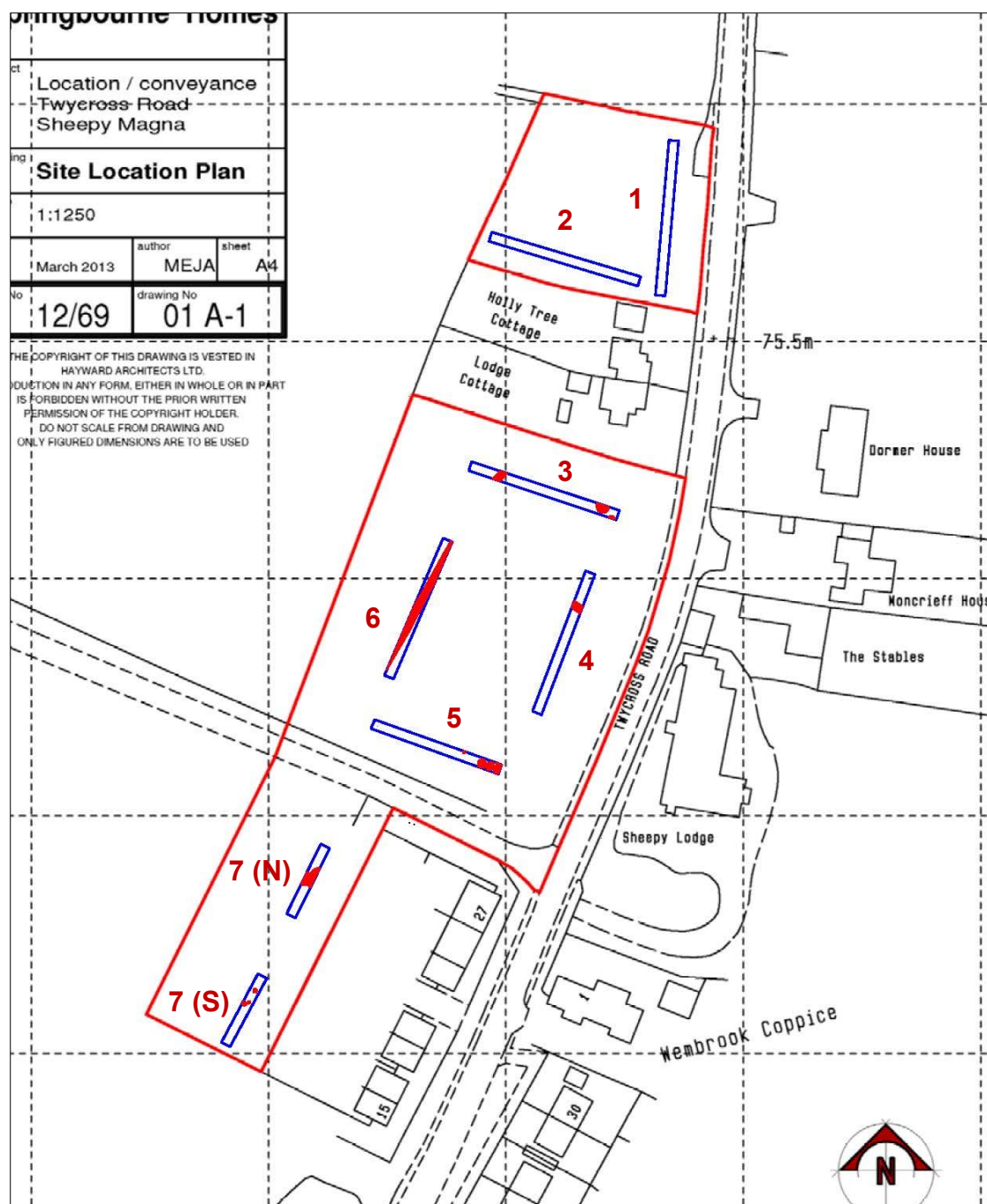


Figure 2: Area of development showing evaluation trench locations

Trenches 1 & 2

Two trenches (1 & 2) targeted the smaller of the two areas of proposed development, located in an overgrown garden adjacent to Twycross Road at the northern end of the site. Both revealed 0.20m-0.70m of garden soil and a 0.12m-0.65m accumulation of mid grey-brown sandy clay silt subsoil overlying pale yellowish-grey and dull orange-brown natural sands and gravels. Neither produced any indications of archaeological activity (Figure 3).

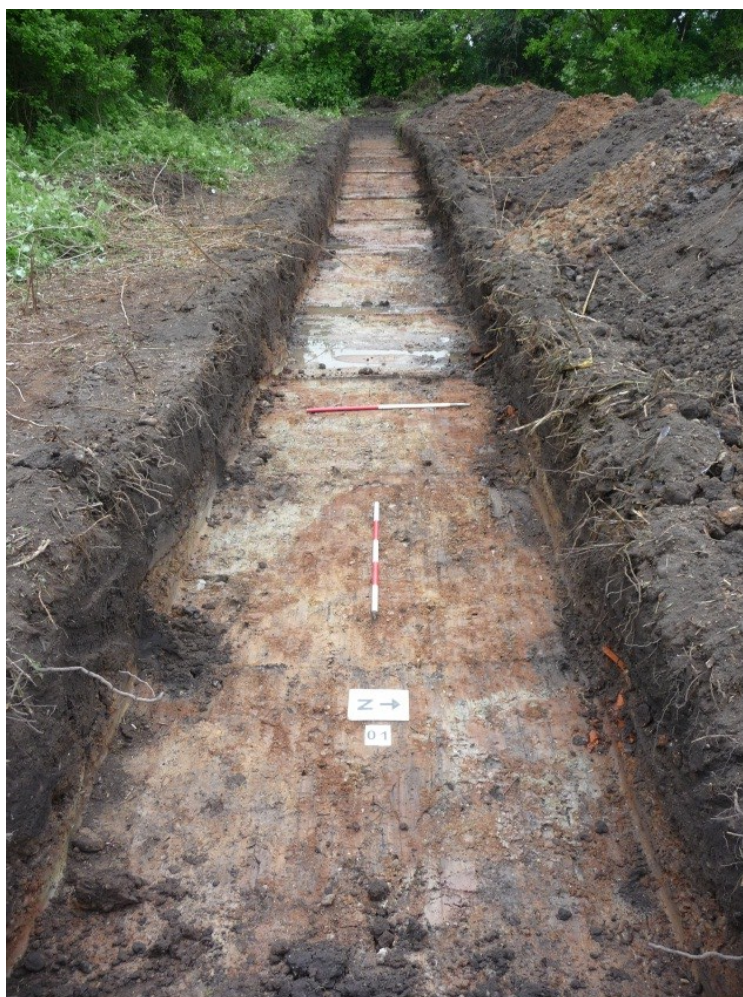


Figure 3: Trench 1: view looking west; 1m scales

Trench 3

Trench 3, located at the northern end of the larger of the two areas of development, was aligned north-west to south-east, and revealed archaeological features sealed by a dark grey sandy loam topsoil and an underlying mid-grey and orange-brown sandy clay silt subsoil (Figures 4-7). A truncated single ditch, [08], was located at the western end of the trench (Figures 5 & 6). The undated open U-shaped profiled feature, aligned north-east to south-west, measured 1.23m wide, 0.20m deep and with 45° sides to a flattish base. Two circular pits [4 & 5] positioned at the east end of the trench both produced Chilvers Coton ware pottery, dating to c.1240 to c.1350 (Figure 7).



Figure 4: Trench 3: General view looking north-west; 1m scales

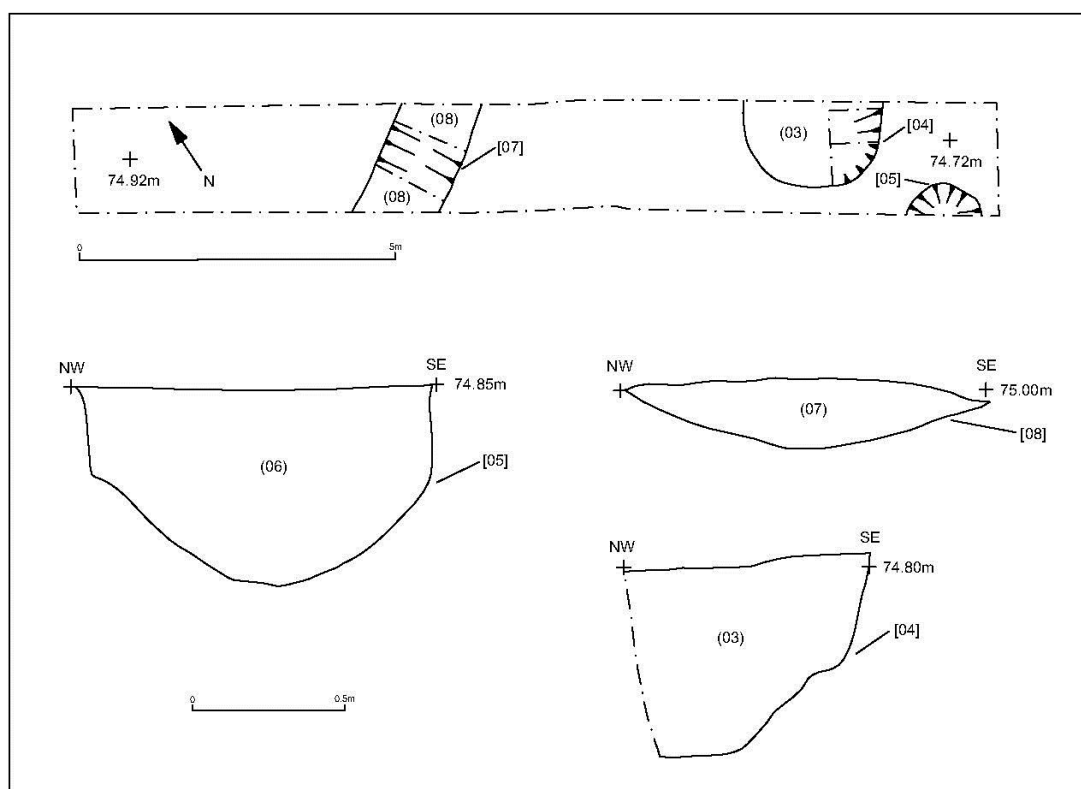


Figure 5: Trench 3: plan and section drawings of features



Figure 6: Ditch [07], view looking south-west (1m scale)



Figure 7: Pit [05]; view looking south (1m scale)

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located at the eastern extent of the site and was aligned north-east to south-west and produced a single feature, a shallow ditch [01], which traversed the trench on a broad north-west to south-east alignment (Figures 8-10). The 1.35m wide, 0.35m deep feature had an open v-shaped profile with 45° sides to a flattish base. Its single fill (02) produced pottery of 11th to 14th century date.



Figure 8: Trench 4: general view looking south-west; 1m scales

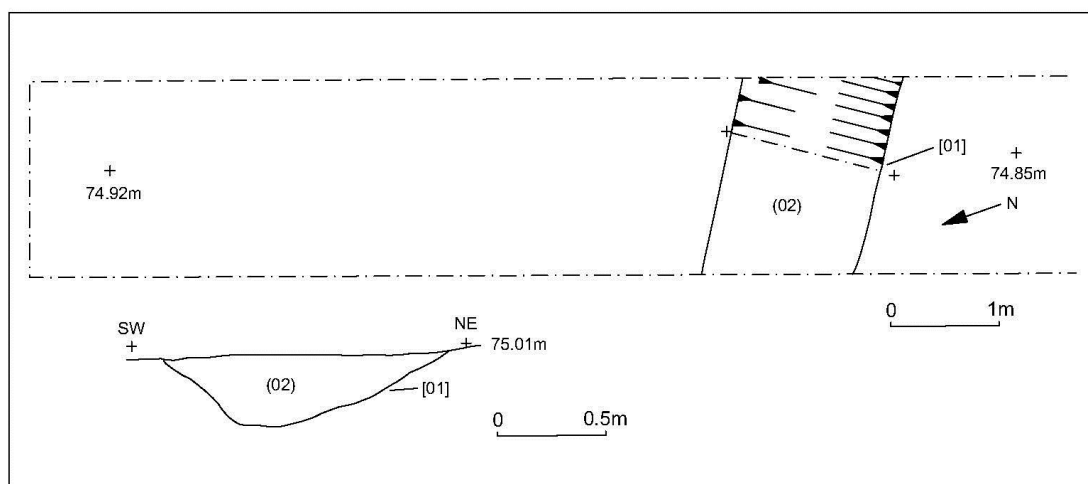


Figure 9: Trench 4: plan and section of ditch [01]



Figure 10: Ditch [01]: view looking north-west (1m scale)

Trench 5

Trench 5 revealed a cluster of archaeological features at its eastern end, closest to the road, as was the case with Trench 3. A single ditch [16] was partially revealed at the trench end, measuring 0.80m+ wide, 0.30m deep and 60° sides to a flattish base. The feature was broadly aligned with the road, its single clayey sand fill containing mid-13th-mid-14th century Chilvers Coton pottery. Two very heavily truncated *c.*1.50m diameter shallow circular pits [10 & 12] and a post-hole [16] lay immediately to the west (Figures 11 & 12). Both pits produced further Chilvers Coton pottery.

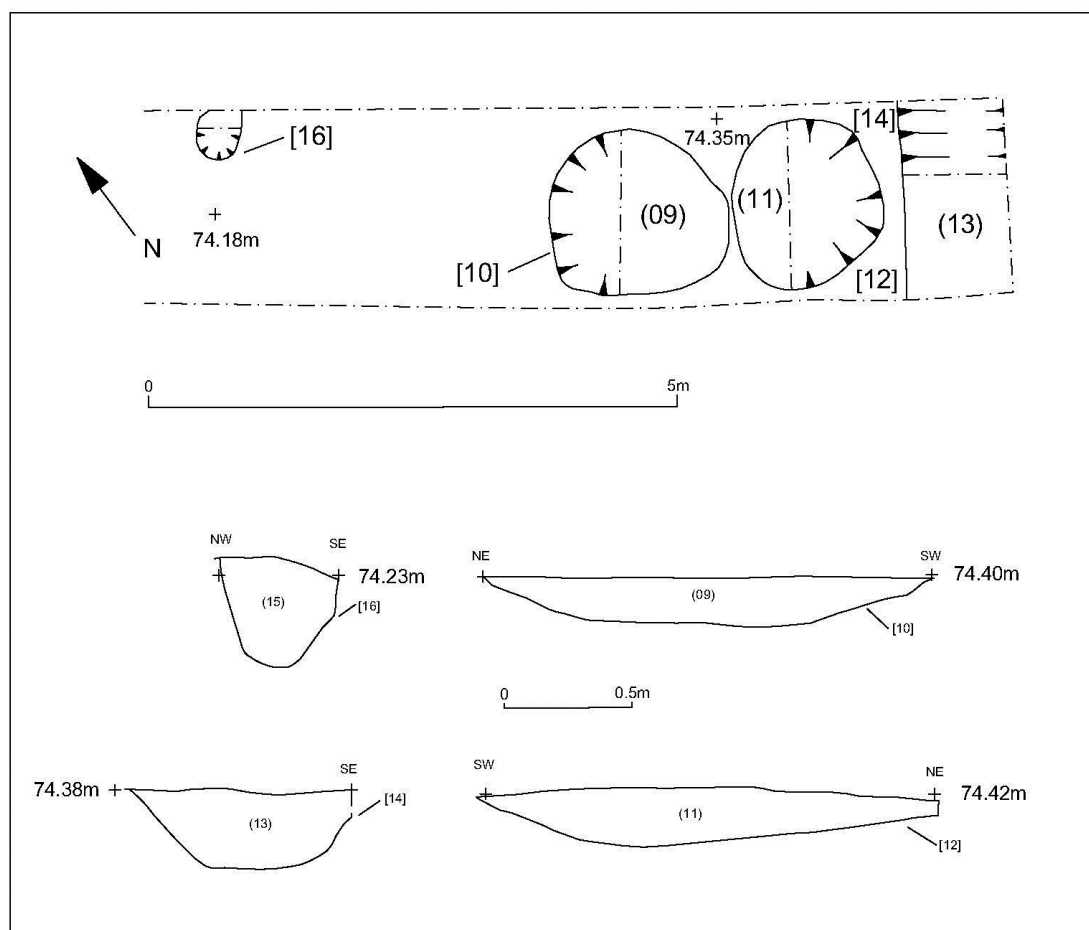


Figure 11: Trench 5: plan and sections of features



Figure 12: Pits [10] & [12]; view looking north

Trench 6

Trench 6 was occupied by a single ditch [18] running the full length of the trench on a broad north-east to south-west alignment. The feature mirrored the other linear features, with a broad, heavily truncated shallow profile and a single clayey sandy silt fill. The ditch may represent a continuation of the linear feature observed in Trench 3 and again contained Chilvers Coton pottery (Figures 13 & 14).

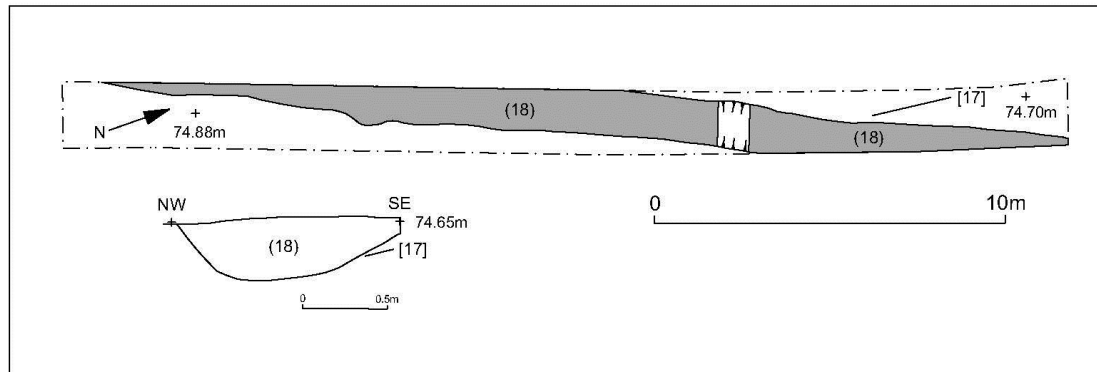


Figure 13: Trench 6: plan and ditch section drawing



Figure 14: Ditch [17]: view looking south (1m scale)

Trench 7

The seventh and final trench was located south of the farm access road and adjacent to the allotments on the west. Provision of access to the latter dictated that the trench comprised two separate 15m-long sections. The northern length was centrally occupied by a pair of intercutting circular pits [23 & 25] measuring 2.1m and 4m wide x 0.8m and 1m deep respectively (Figures 15 & 16). The dimensions and paucity of finds from the features suggests their having functioned as quarry pits. Feature [22] contained a small quantity of medieval pottery.

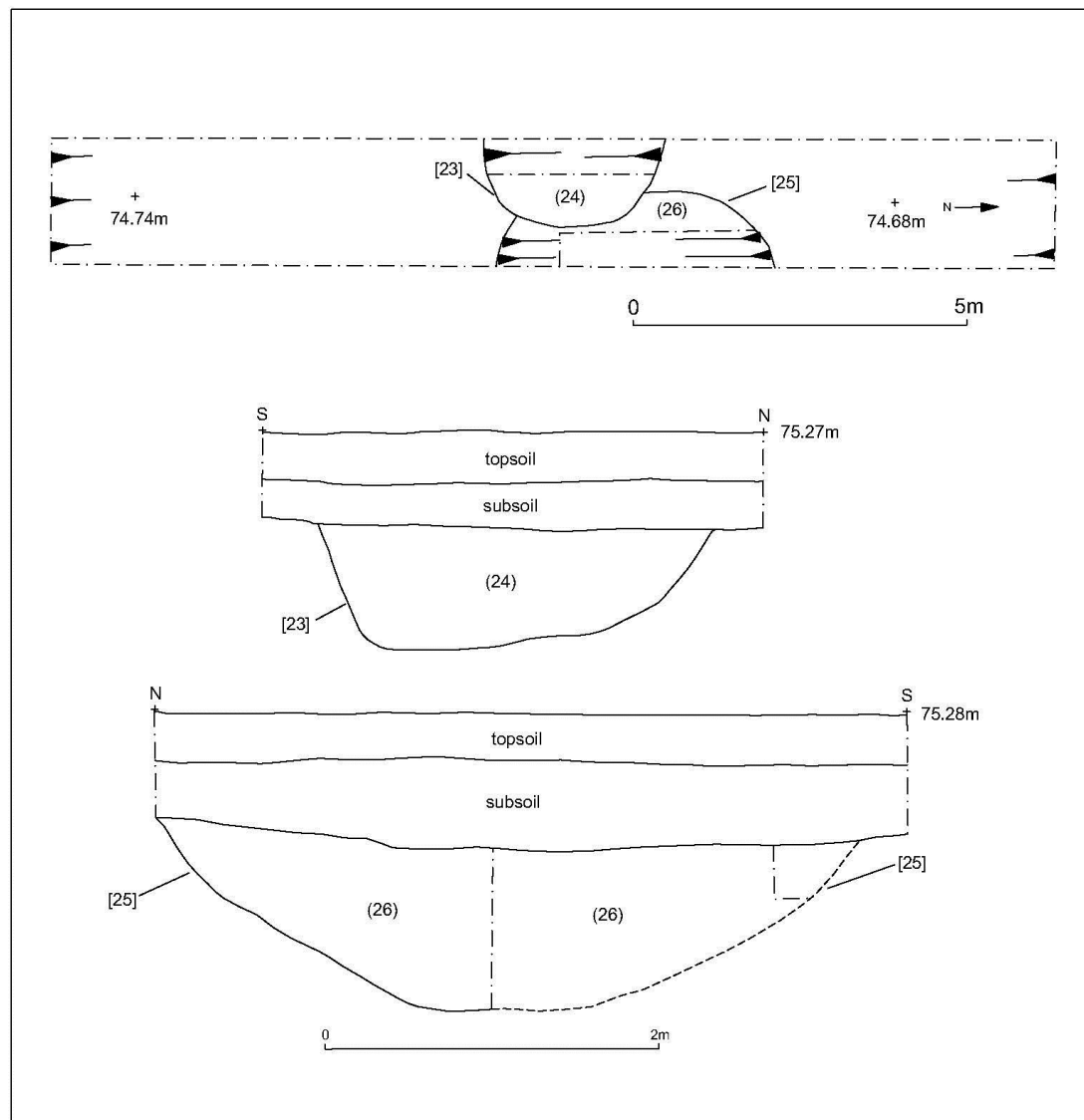


Figure 15: Trench 7 (N): plan and section drawings



Figure 16: Trench 7(N): general view looking south (1m scale)

Trench 7(S) revealed a cluster of three oval post-holes or small pits [20, 22 & 28] with medieval Potters Marston and Coventry ware pottery present in [22].

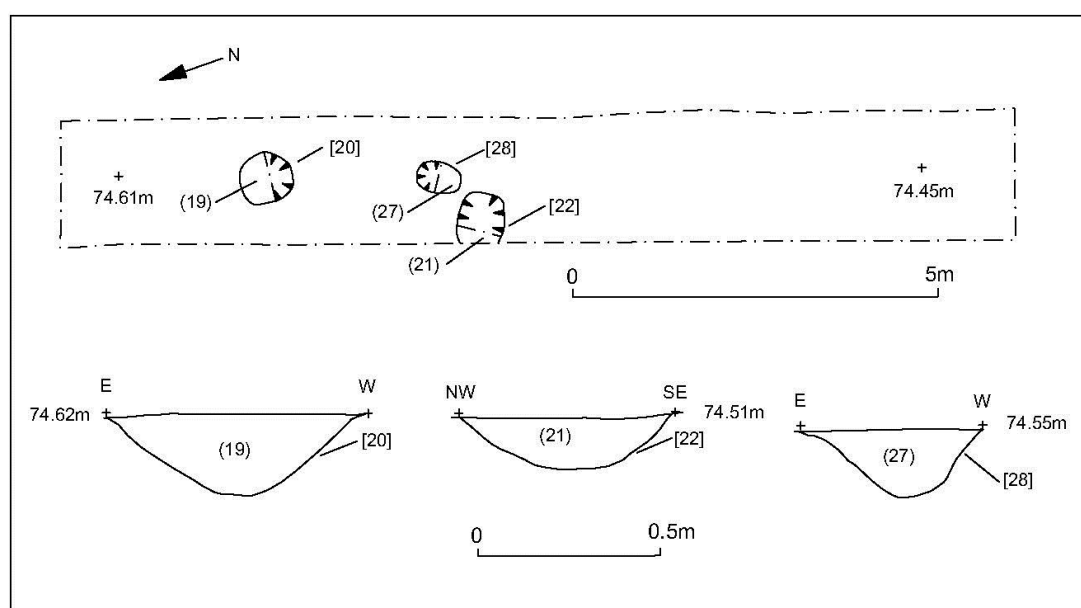


Figure 17: Trench 7 (S) plan and sections



Figure 18: Post-hole [28]; view looking south (0.5m scale)

Table 1. Details of trenches

TRENCH	ORIENTATION	LENGTH AND WIDTH (metres)	DESCRIPTION	DEPTH (MIN-MAX metres)
1	E-W	30 x 1.9	Topsoil 0.38-0.70m, subsoil 0.12-0.50m. No archaeological finds or features.	0.60-0.90
2	N-S	26.5 x 1.9	Topsoil 0.20-0.35m, subsoil 0.20-0.65m. No archaeological finds or features.	0.50-1.0
3	NW-SE	30 x 1.9	Topsoil 0.23-0.38m, subsoil 0.13-0.28m. Ditch [07], pits [04] & [05]	0.43-0.58
4	NE-SW	30 x 1.9	Topsoil 0.17-0.33m, subsoil 0.04-0.18m. Ditch [01]	0.32-0.50
5	NW-SE	30 x 1.9	Topsoil 0.32-0.52m, subsoil 0.18-0.30m. Ditch [14], pits [10] & [12], post hole [16]	0.50-0.82
6	NNE-SSW	30 x 1.9	Topsoil 0.35-0.50m, subsoil 0.16-0.28m. Ditch [17]	0.51-0.74
7 (S)	N-S	14.5 x 1.9	Topsoil 0.36-0.45, subsoil 0.12-0.25m. Post holes [20], [22], [28]	0.60-0.70
7 (N)	SW-NE	14.7 x 1.9	Topsoil 0.28-0.30m, subsoil 0.10-0.26m. Pits [23] & [25]	0.63-0.70

Discussion and Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation on land at Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire, produced clear evidence for medieval occupation in the form of refuse and/or quarry pits and probable property boundary ditches dating to the early 12th to mid-14th centuries. These features are likely to represent occupational activity towards the rear of properties fronting Twycross Road immediately to the east and may suggest that Sheepy Magna may have been larger with occupation extending this far north or alternatively that the focus of the village had shifted south since the 14th century.

The recent work accords with the results from earlier fieldwork undertaken by ULAS in 2002-3 adjacent to the site on the road frontage, and further serves to highlight the significance of the Twycross Road as a major route into the medieval village.

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A78.2013), consisting of ceramic finds plus paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service.

The archive consists of:

- pottery sherds
- 8 trench recording sheets
- Photographic record indices
- 40 digital photographs
- Monochrome 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 Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Acknowledgements

Anthony Gnanaratnam, Wayne Jarvis and Roger Kipling of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of Springbourne Homes. The work was commissioned by Hayward Architects on their behalf and we would like to thank Martin Anderson for his help and co-operation in arranging the fieldwork. The project was managed by Vicki Score.

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Oasis Information

Project Name	Land at Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Roger Kipling
Previous/Future work	Residential development
Current Land Use	Agricultural
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-determination
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK 3285 0178
Start/end dates of field work	June 2013
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	0.83ha.

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Appendix 1: The Post-Roman Pottery

Deborah Sawday

Introduction

The pottery, 58 sherds, weighing 1.05 kg, and a vessel rim equivalent of 0.795, (calculated by adding together the circumference of the surviving rim sherds, where one vessel equals 1.00) was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group, (MPRG 1998; MPRG, 2001) and the ULAS fabric series (Sawday 2009). The results are shown below (Tables 1 and 2).

Condition

The pottery is generally in good condition, although some sherds show evidence of abrasion, and the average sherd weight is 18.1 grams, largely due to the survival of relatively large fragments of a jar and a jug in fabrics CO2 and PM in context [22]. Joining sherds were noted within several contexts, but none between contexts.

Chronology, Sources and Vessel Types

Contexts [1], [4], [5], [10], [12], [14] and [18] all contained sherds of the Chilvers Coton CC1, fabric A/Ai at Chilvers Coton (Mayes and Scott 1984), which is dated c.1240 to c.1350 in the Warwickshire Medieval and Post-Medieval Ceramic Type Series (Soden and Ratkai 1998). The single sherds of unclassified Medieval Sandy ware in Medieval Sandy ware 2 in context [16] and [23] respectively, lie within a similar date range.

The absence of any fine wheel thrown medieval sandy wares, including the Chilvers Coton fabric CC1, may suggest a slightly earlier date for the pottery from contexts [20] and [22], although only ten sherds in total were recovered from the two contexts. The former contained a hand-made fragment of the Chilvers Coton CC5, fabric B/Bi at Chilvers Coton (Mayes and Scott 1984), which is dated to the later 13th century in the Warwickshire Medieval and Post-Medieval Ceramic Type Series (Soden and Ratkai 1998). Similarly in context [22] the hand-made sherds of the Coventry CO2, fabric A at Coventry (Redknap, 1985) and Potters Marston are both dated from c. 1100 (Soden and Ratkai 1998; Sawday 2009).

Table 1: The medieval and later pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams).

Fabric	Common Name	Sherds	Weight	Eves	Average sherd weight
CO2	Coventry A	11	319		29.0
CC5	Chilvers Coton B/Bi	13	278	0.06	21.3
CC1	Chilvers Coton A/Ai	27	411	0.735	15.2
PM	Potters Marston	1	21		21.0
MS1	Medieval Sandy 1	3	5		1.6
MS2	Medieval Sandy 2	2	10		5.0
MS	Medieval Sandy	1	6		6.0
Totals		58	1050	0.795	18.10

Most if not all of the pottery was typically local in origin: the production centres at Coventry, Chilvers Coton and Potters Marston were all major suppliers of pottery in the region during the medieval period. The range of identifiable vessel types; jugs, jars and bowls, suggests that this is a domestic assemblage, indeed may of the sherds

of unknown vessel types were sooted externally, indicating that they had been used for cooking.

Conclusions

This assemblage of medieval pottery, which dates generally from c.1100 to c.1350, is of note. The range of fabrics present and the sherd size, particularly which from contexts [20] and [22], may suggest occupation in the vicinity from perhaps as early as the early twelfth century.

The pottery compliments that recovered from a salvage excavation on an adjacent site to the south-east, (Sawday 2003), which suggested changing patterns of use, from the cultivation of open land to occupation fronting directly on to the Twycross Road, a former turnpike road (W. Jarvis, pers. comm.), from c.1250. Both these excavations were outside the current core of the village and provide some evidence of the shifting patterns of cultivation, building and occupation associated with the evolution of the settlement at Sheepy Maga.

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Table 2: The medieval and l pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams) by context.

Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos	Gr	EVE	Comments
2 [1]	CO2 – Coventry A	5	27		Abraded base and lower wall fragments, externally sooted – same vessel
2	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	1	2		Abraded, externally sooted
3 [4]	CC5 – Chilvers Coton B/Bi	1	26		Basal angle, externally sooted
3	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	3	14		Green glazed, two join
3	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	1	6		Externally sooted
3	MS – Medieval Sandy	1	6		Reduced grey internally & core, buff exterior – fine sand & sparse calcareous inclusions
6 [5]	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	2	2		Tiny sherds, one externally sooted
6	MS2 – Medieval Sandy 2	1	1		Possibly a coarse version of CC1
9 [10]	CC5 – Chilvers Coton B/Bi	1	83		Highly decorated strap handle, probably from a jug
9	CC5 – Chilvers Coton B/Bi	1	17		Body, externally sooted
9	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	1	130	0.36	Jug rim, diameter c.110mm & strap handle stub with 4 slashes on neck, handle dowed, traces of green glaze
9	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	1	1		Body, abraded
9	MS1 – Medieval Sandy 1	2	10		One green glazed, possibly fine examples of CC1.
11 [12]	CC5 – Chilvers Coton B/Bi	1	25		Basal angle, externally sooted
11	CC5 – Chilvers Coton B/Bi	5	52	0.06	Everted, flat-topped jar rim, diameter c.140mm sooted externally.
11	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	3	16	0.01	Externally flanged bowl rim, diameter c.120mm sooted externally.
11	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	3	35	0.05	Everted bowl rim, diameter c.240mm traces of external sooting, abraded.
11	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	2	39	0.155	Jar rim, diameter c.170 mm join.
11	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	8	103		Minimum of 4 vessels, 2 sooted externally
13 [14]	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	1	24		Jug neck & body, glazed & inscribed line decoration, over fired/burnt.
15 [16]	MS2 – Medieval Sandy 2	1	3		
17 [18]	CC5 – Chilvers Coton B/Bi	1	22		Basal angle, sooted externally
17	CC1 – Chilvers Coton A/Ai	1	39	0.16	Everted jar rim diameter c.200mm
19 [20]	CC5 – Chilvers Coton B/Bi	3	53		Two externally sooted, probably all one vessel.

21 [22]	CO2 – Coventry A	6	292		Joining jar fragments – part of an externally sooted convex base.
21 [22]	PM – Potters Marston	1	21		Jug neck
24 [23]	MS2 – Medieval Sandy 2	1	1		Possibly a coarse version of CC1

Appendix 2: The Environmental Evidence

Anita Radini

Four 20 litre soil samples were taken from pit fills from Trenches 3 and 5 (pits [05, 10, 12 & 14] for the recovery of plant and other remains in order to assess the potential preservation of evidence about past environment, food production and consumption at the site and possible dating evidence. After examination, none of the samples were found to hold potential for environmental analysis. Therefore no further archaeobotanical analysis is recommended on these samples.

It is important to take into account that soil conditions can vary widely across different areas of a site. Despite this assessment being negative, an appropriate sampling strategy is still highly advisable if future archaeological work is undertaken in the area.

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