



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An archaeological field
evaluation at
Measham Fields Farm,
Swepstone Road,
Measham,
Leicestershire
(SK 3491 1174)

Leon Hunt



ULAS Report No 2013-173
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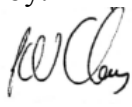
**An archaeological field evaluation at
Measham Fields Farm,
Sweepstone Road,
Measham,
Leicestershire
(SK 3491 1174)**

Leon Hunt

for

UK COAL Surface Mines Limited
Pre-Planning Enquiry

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Accession Number: X.A167.2013

CONTENTS

Summary	1
Introduction.....	1
Location and Geology.....	1
Historical and Archaeological Background	3
Archaeological Objectives	3
Methodology	3
Results.....	4
Trench 01	4
Trench 02	5
Trench 03	7
Trench 04	7
Conclusion	9
References.....	9
Acknowledgements.....	10
Publication	10
Archive.....	10

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location.....	2
Figure 2: Plan of Measham Fields Farm, with trench locations	4

PLATES

Plate 1: Post excavation view of Trench 02, showing feature [1], looking south-east ..	5
Plate 2: Test hole through feature [1] in Trench 02, looking north-west.....	6
Plate 3: Work in progress on Trench 04, looking north-east	8
Plate 4: Post excavation view of Trench 04, looking south	8

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Measham Fields Farm, Swepstone Road, Measham (SK 3491 1174) in advance of the proposed extension of the neighbouring open cast coal mine into the farm area.

Cropmarks associated with prehistoric features and Roman artefacts have been located nearby. Fieldwalking undertaken on the fields associated with the open cast mine prior to their excavation has yielded prehistoric artefacts from the Mesolithic through to the Neolithic period. The early 19th century maps of the site also show buildings on the northern part of the site, the remains of which may be located by trial trenching.

A total of four trenches were placed on pasture on the northern part of the site and within the farm itself. No archaeological features were discovered within four of the trenches and the trench placed within the area of the farm revealed heavily disturbed ground and a large amount of made-up ground. Trench 02, placed on pasture to the north-east contained a linear feature of unknown date and origin. The feature was filled with colliery waste and so is likely to be fairly modern in date.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by UK Coal Surface Mines Limited to carry out an archaeological field evaluation at Measham Fields Farm, Swepstone Road, Measham, Leicestershire (NGR: SK 3491 1174). Planning consent is to be sought for an extension to the existing opencast coal mine to include the farm area.

This archaeological work is in accordance with NPPF Section 12: Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment.

Scatters of Roman pottery and a series of cropmarks associated with prehistoric pit alignments exist close to the site. Further scatters of flint artefacts dating from the Mesolithic through to the Neolithic have been retrieved through field walking in the area.

Early maps of the area also show buildings within the farm complex, which may be identified by archaeological fieldwork.

The farmhouse and brick built pigsties located within the site have some historic building potential and are the subject of a separate survey (Clarke 2013).

Location and Geology

Measham Fields Farm lies on the southern side of Swepstone Road, around 1.5 miles south-east of Measham town centre (Figure 1).

The site consists of a rectangular farm complex, oriented north-east to south-west of around 2 hectares. Most of the site is covered in farm buildings, interspaced with hard standing. Close to the centre of the site is the farmhouse, the core of which dates from the 18th century and is the subject of an archaeological building survey (Clarke 2013). There is a small range of brick pigsties to the south of the farmhouse, also to be surveyed, but most other buildings are barns and animal pens of modern construction.

To the north of the buildings are three small enclosures and there is a garden to the rear of the farmhouse. All the farmland was under pasture at the time of the archaeological work.

The site slopes slightly to the south, from around 99m aOD along the road edge to around 95m aOD.

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology is likely to be Pennine Middle Coal Measures; mudstone, siltstone and sandstone.

The open cast mine of Minorca Surface Mine surrounds the area and the site is bordered by large earth bunds on three sides.

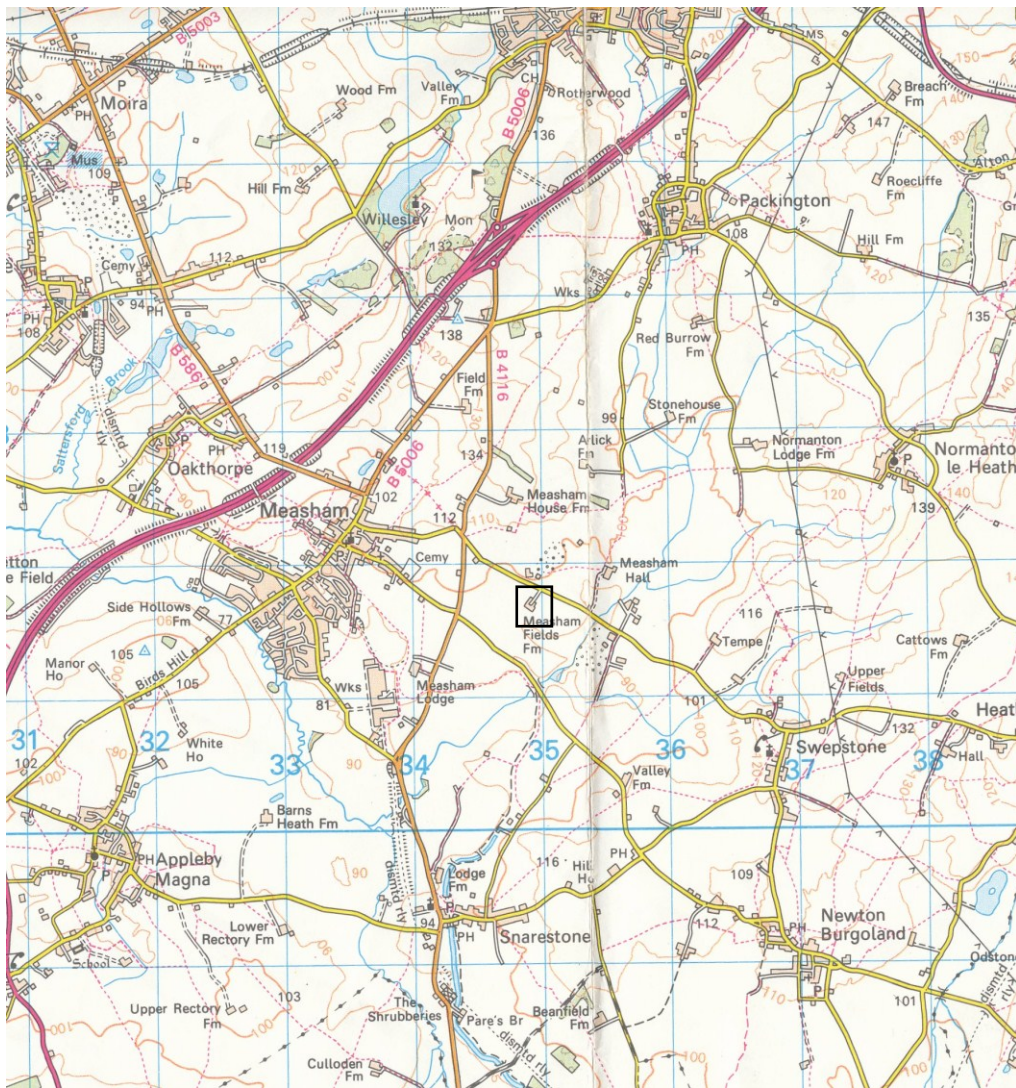


Figure 1: Site Location

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Historical and Archaeological Background

An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment for the area has been prepared (Hunt and Clay 2008). The Historic Environment Record (HER) shows a scatter of Roman pottery has been found to the west of the farm (HER Ref No. MLE8996) and there is a cropmark showing a pit alignment in the field to the east of the farm (MLE4760). Although not included on the HER there is evidence of the former mine and associated industrial railway within the application area. Since the original desk-based assessment was prepared in 2008 additional cropmark evidence has been located nearby. These comprise two pit alignments running north-east to south-west (MLE17410) and north-west to south-east (MLE17411).

A fieldwalking survey was undertaken of much of the area, north-west of Minorca Farm, by Leicestershire Museums Archaeological survey team in 1994 (Liddle 1995). This located a general background scatter of worked flint in all the fields walked including blade types (Mesolithic – Neolithic). Although no dense concentrations were identified some areas of potential, based on the presence of cores and implements, can be identified (Liddle 1995). A small assemblage of Roman pottery was located in the north-western part of the area. A general spread of medieval and post-medieval pottery was located in all areas walked and probably represents a manuring scatter.

Further fieldwalking and geophysical surveys (Parker 2008; Butler 2008) have been undertaken and the latter has revealed some anomalies of likely archaeological origin.

Trial trenching and subsequent watching brief identified some archaeological deposits including, to the south, Saxon remains (Speed 2011).

An early Ordnance Survey map of the area, dating from c.1815 shows a rectangular building at the very northern end of the farm site.

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2010) in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2010). The archaeological work followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological work* (WSI) prepared by ULAS (Appendix).

The WSI asked for a 6% sample of the area by trial trenching, this would equate to four 30m trenches and four 15m trenches. This was later modified due to site constraints to four 30m and one 20m trench. However, due to the presence of livestock still active within the two fields to the north-east of the farm only four trenches were excavated and the one trench (Trench 02) that was excavated within one of the fields that could be accessed by the livestock, was hastily backfilled after being recorded. Trenches 1-3 were excavated on grassland and Trench 4 was excavated through hardstanding within the farm itself. The position of this was moved as the proposed area was in use as a dumping area for topsoil and concrete (Figure 2).

All trenches were excavated to the top of archaeological remains or the natural substratum, whichever was the higher in the sequence.

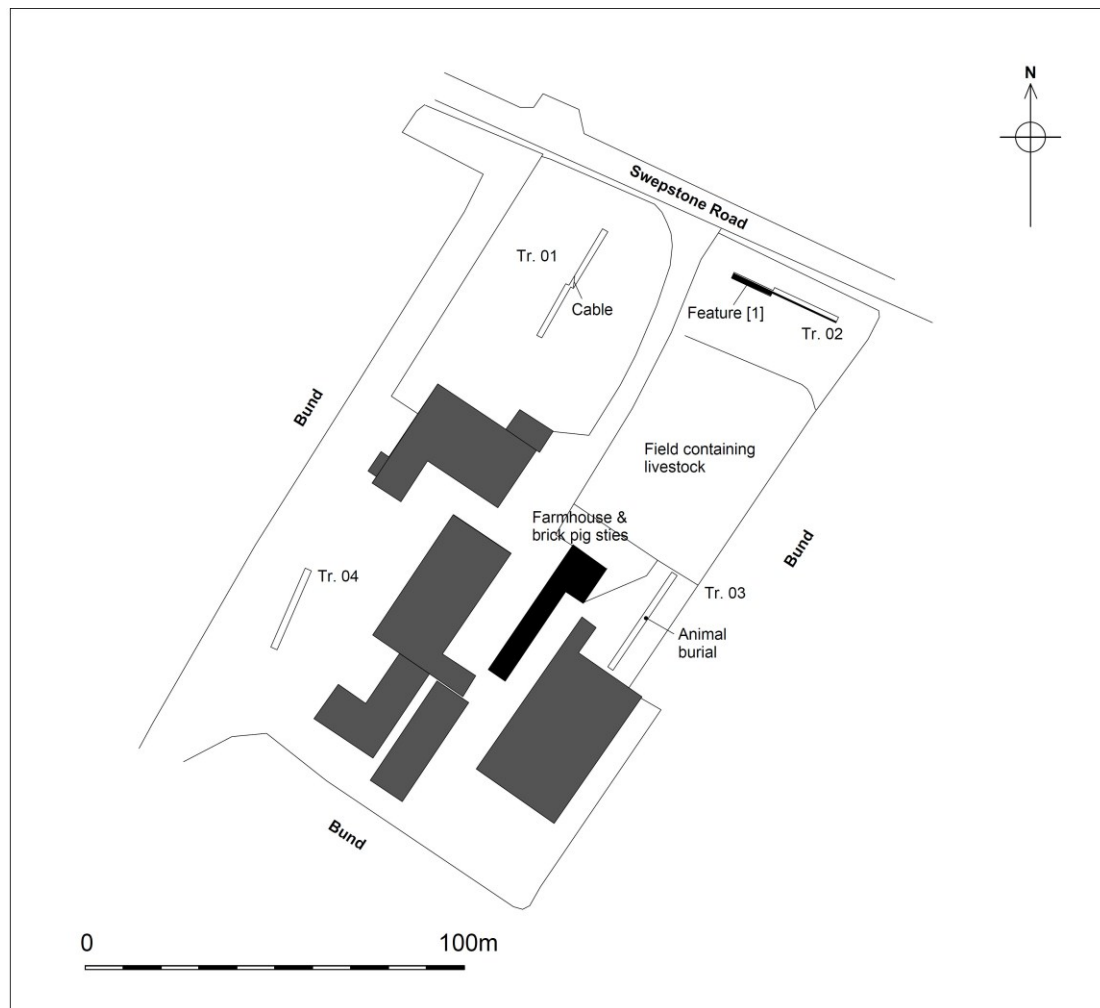


Figure 2: Plan of Measham Fields Farm, with trench locations

Results

Trench 01

Orientation: NE-SW

Length: 30m

Width: 1.6m

Topsoil: Yellowish brown clayey silt with rare small stones

Subsoil: Reddish brown clayey silt

Natural substratum: Reddish brown silty clay, stony in places

Interval	SW 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m NE
Topsoil depth	0.20m	0.23m	0.28m	0.22m	0.30m	0.23m	0.36m
Subsoil depth	0.25m	0.22m	0.14m	0.10m	0.09m	0.18m	0.10m
Top of natural	0.45m	0.45m	0.42m	0.32m	0.39m	0.41m	0.46m
Base of trench	0.47m	0.49m	0.43m	0.33m	0.42m	0.43m	0.55m

This trench was excavated within the small enclosed field to the north-west of the farm buildings.

No archaeological features or artefacts were discovered within this trench. The trench had to be excavated on a new alignment at around 18m from the northern end, as an electrical cable was discovered during the excavation.



Plate 1: Post excavation view of Trench 02, showing feature [1], looking south-east

Trench 02

Orientation: NW-SE

Length: 30m

Width: 1.6m

Topsoil: Very dark grey silt

Subsoil: None

Natural substratum: Pinkish orange clay, with stony patches

Interval	SE 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m NW
Topsoil depth	0.35m	0.33m	0.38m	0.36m	0.39m	0.40m	0.40m
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.10m
Top of natural	0.35m	0.33m	0.38m	0.36m	0.39m	0.40m	0.40m
Base of trench	0.50m	0.46m	0.47m	0.46m	0.60m	0.50m	0.55m

This trench was excavated within the small enclosed field to the north-east of the farm buildings.

A linear feature was revealed aligned with the trench and so the trench was excavated on a new alignment to better define the feature (Plate 1).

The feature [1] ran the length of the trench and was 1.1m wide, with a fill (2) of coal and colliery waste, topsoil and brick. It appeared to have sloping sides and was around 0.20m deep (Plate 2). A small trial hole was dug through the feature along the baulk, The trench was then backfilled immediately after recording due to the presence of young bullocks in the field.



Plate 2: Test hole through feature [1] in Trench 02, looking north-west

Trench 03

Orientation: NE-SW

Length: 30m

Width: 1.6m

Topsoil: Very dark brownish grey clayey silt

Subsoil: Reddish brown clayey silt

Natural substratum: Pinkish orange clay, with stony patches at very NE end, and reddish brown silty clay, stony in places throughout the rest of the trench.

Interval	SW 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m NE
Topsoil Depth	0.30m	0.30m	0.40m	0.40m	0.30m	0.30m	0.30m
Subsoil depth	0.08m	0.10m	0.10m	0.10m	-	-	0.05m
Top of natural	0.38m	0.40m	0.50m	0.50m	0.30m	0.30m	0.35m
Base of trench	0.38m	0.40m	0.50m	0.50m	0.38m	0.40m	0.35m

This trench was excavated in the grassed garden area to the east of the farmhouse.

A small pit was discovered around 15m along the trench. This was examined and found to be a modern animal burial, possibly a dog. Two field drains, one ceramic and one of stone were discovered running east to west across the trench. There were no other identifiable features in the trench.

Trench 04

Orientation: N-S

Length: 22m

Width: 1.6m

Topsoil: None

Subsoil: Dark orangish brown

Natural substratum: Light brownish orange clay

Interval	S 0m	5m	10m	15m	22m N
Made-up ground depth	1.20m	0.95m	0.60m	0.80m	0.50m
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	0.15m	0.30m

Top of natural	1.20m	0.95m	0.60m	0.95m	0.80m
Base of trench	1.20m	0.95m	0.60m	0.95m	0.80m



Plate 3: Work in progress on Trench 04, looking north-east



Plate 4: Post excavation view of Trench 04, looking south

This trench was excavated within the rough ground/ hard standing area to the west of the farm (Plate 3).

The sequence mainly consisted of tip lines of rubble, colliery waste and pieces of metal and plastic sheets. At the southern end of the trench, the rubble and rubbish lay over the disturbed natural clay, but in the northern end of the trench the thinner rubble layer lay over a subsoil, which lay over the clay.

It was initially planned for this trench to be 30m long in order to make up the shortfall in trenching area due to the JCB's narrow bucket width and the absence of a trench in the field containing the bullocks. However, Trench 4 soon became flooded during the excavations and the sides began to collapse and therefore the excavation was halted at 22m length (Plate 4).

No archaeological features were discovered within this trench.

Conclusion

The evaluation at Measham Fields Farm had some potential due to the presence of cropmarks associated with prehistoric archaeological features together with finds of prehistoric and Roman artefacts in the fields surrounding the farm. Saxon remains have also been found, although these were located in trench several hundred metres to the south-east of the farm (Speed 2011). An early OS map of the site also showed a building located at the northern end of the site

It was not possible to excavate the number of trenches that were intended due to the constraints of the site, however, an attempt was made to cover most areas of the pasture land and other grassed areas and to place one trench within the farm complex itself.

Trenches 01 and 03, placed on the north-western enclosure and within the garden to the east of the farmhouse respectively, were negative for archaeology, with only a modern animal burial and a buried cable as notable features.

Trench 04 contained mainly made-up ground over mostly disturbed natural clay. This trench lay within an area that was likely to have been heavily disturbed, due to its proximity to the mineral railway, which passed through the edge of the farm here. There may still be some potential within this area, but this is likely to be in isolated areas not disturbed by the railway, possibly further to the north and east of this trench, closer to the centre of the farmyard.

Trench 02, within the north-eastern enclosure contained a fairly substantial linear feature. Unfortunately, this could not be fully explored due to the presence of the livestock, which were free to roam into the field. It appear to be a ditch like feature, rather than the cut for a wall, as it seemed to have sloping sides and also appeared to be only 0.20m deep.

It may be associated with the building that appears on the 1815 mapping of the area. It may be an old hedgeline or enclosure ditch, although given that the fill seems to mainly contain colliery waste, it is most likely fairly modern in origin.

No evidence for buildings was revealed during the excavation of this trench.

References

Hunt, L. 2008 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for Land at Minorca, Measham, Leicestershire*. ULAS Report No. 2008-036)

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Parker, D. 2008, *An Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey on 'Minorca' Land to the east of Measham, Leicestershire*. University of Leicester Archaeological Services unpublished report 2008-171.

Speed, G., 2011 *An Archaeological Evaluation on 'Minorca' Land, to the East of Measham, Leicestershire*. (ULAS Report No. 2011-166)

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Anton Fix of UK Coal and Duncan at the farm for their help and co-operation with this project. The machine was driven by Steve Platts and was supplied by Cuckoo Gap.

The project was managed by Patrick Clay and the work was carried out by Leon Hunt and Jamie Patrick.

Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

OASIS data entry

Project Name	Measham Fields Farm, Measham
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Leon Hunt
Previous/Future work	Not known
Current Land Use	Pasture/ farm
Development Type	Open Cast Mine
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition
Site Co ordinates	SK 3491 1174
Start/end dates of field work	16-10-2013 to 17-10-2013
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums
Study Area	2ha

Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A167.2013 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2013-173)
- 4 Trench recording sheets
- 1 Context Sheet

1 Contact sheet of digital photographs

1 CD digital photographs

1 Set B&W contact sheets

1 Set B&W negatives

The archive for the building survey for the farmhouse and associated buildings will be held under the same accession number and contains:

1 Unbound copy of survey report

2 x A3 sheets of permatrace with building plans

1 set of contact sheets of digital photographs

1 CD digital photographs

1 set B&W contact sheets

1 set B&W negatives

1 location plan for photographs

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18-10-2013

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