



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Field Evaluation at
Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the
Hill, Leicestershire.
NGR: SP 379 956**

Andrew Hyam



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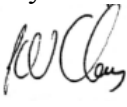
**An Archaeological Field Evaluation at
Hillary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill
Leicestershire.**

NGR: SP 379 956

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For: George Stew Limited

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Summary

An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken on land to the east of Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire on the 7th and 8th of November 2012 by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). The proposed development site lies outside the village core but is within a field containing preserved medieval ridge and furrow. Due to the location within an area of archaeological interest, the Leicestershire County Council Senior Planning Archaeologist as advisor to the local planning authority has requested that a staged programme of archaeological investigation takes place to identify and locate any archaeological remains that may be affected by the development.

Five 20m evaluation trenches were excavated across the site none of which revealed any evidence of archaeological features or deposits.

Introduction

In accordance with NPPF (Section 12 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment) this document forms the report for an archaeological field investigation (evaluation) on land to the east of Hillary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire, NGR: SP 379 956. It is intended that this programme of archaeological fieldwork will provide preliminary indications of the character and extent of any heritage assets which may be present on the site in order that the potential impact of any future development on such remains may be assessed by the planning authority. The work has been commissioned by George Stew Limited and followed that specified in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work at Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire* (hereinafter the WSI).

Background

As noted in the ULAS WSI the village of Higham on the Hill is located approximately 3km to the north-east of Nuneaton and 4km to the north-west of Hinckley, close to the Leicestershire-Warwickshire border (Fig. 1). The proposed development site is located in between the disused Ashby and Nuneaton Joint Railway Line and Main Street, on the eastern side of Station Road, adjacent to Hilary Bevins Close (Fig. 2). The site is centred on SP 379 956 and is presently used as pasture land and has a system of low ridge and furrow earthworks running from

south-east to north-west. It is surrounded by a variety of hedges, fences and trees with access in the south-east and north-east corners. A footpath entrance also gives access from the end of Hilary Bevins Close. The site slopes down to the north from a height of approximately 108m OD following the general slope leading down from the village centre towards the former railway line. The northern boundary of the site is at approximately 130m OD. A geophysical survey was undertaken by Stratascan (Smalley 2012) which identified an anomaly probably of a former field boundary but was otherwise relatively negative. The five specified trenches were located to provide a 2% sample across the site and also to target potential geophysical anomalies suggested in the survey (Fig. 3).



Figure 1. Higham on the Hill location

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Figure 2. Site location (Supplied by client)

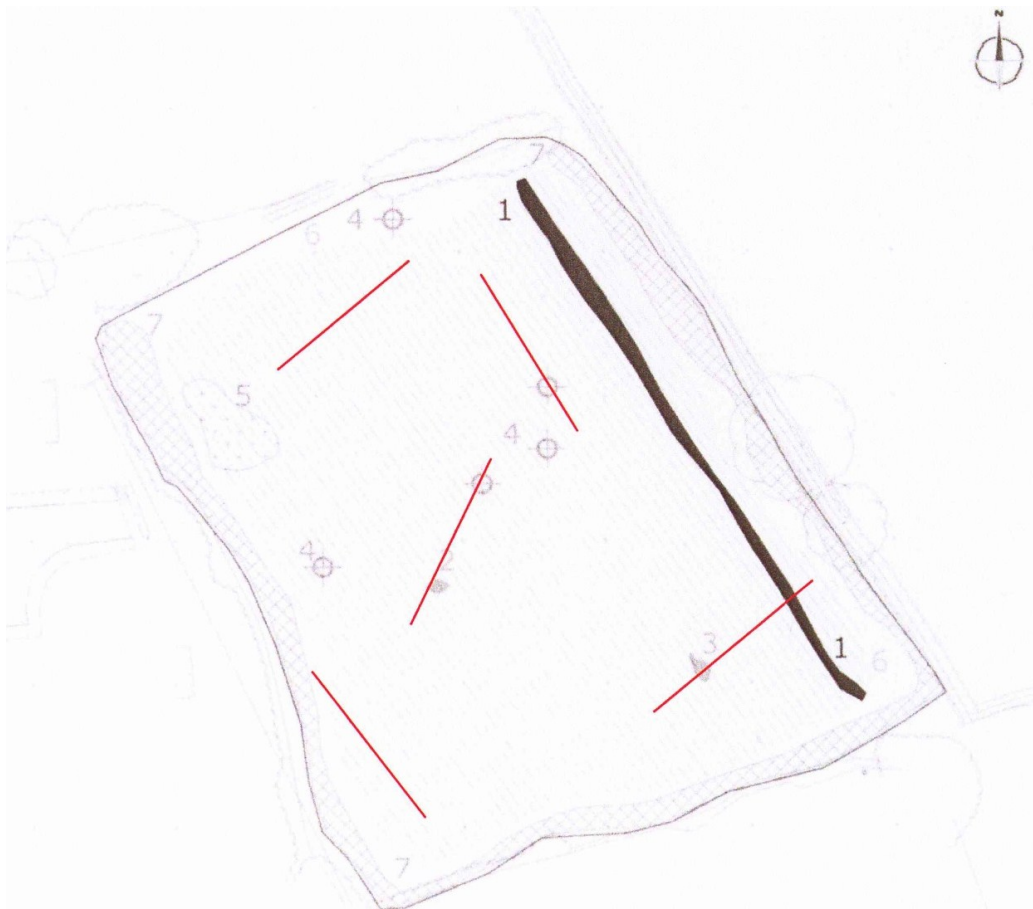


Figure 3. Proposed trench locations in relation to geophysical anomalies

Objectives

As identified in the ULAS Design Specification for archaeological work 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 was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of any 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 can 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 in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008).

Five 20m long by 1.6m wide trenches were proposed in the ULAS WSI (Fig. 4). Topsoil and subsoil was removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All spoil heaps were inspected for unstratified archaeological material. All trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or down to the natural substratum in the absence of any archaeological deposits.

Trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located would be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

Each trench was recorded on a standard ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheet noting soil depths and descriptions. One longitudinal face and the base of each trench were recorded in this way. Sections of any excavated archaeological features would be drawn at an appropriate scale. Any drawn sections of archaeological features would also be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum, or a permanent fixed bench mark. Trench locations were recorded and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

A photographic record of the investigations was prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. Colour digital and black and white 35mm photographs were taken throughout the evaluation. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

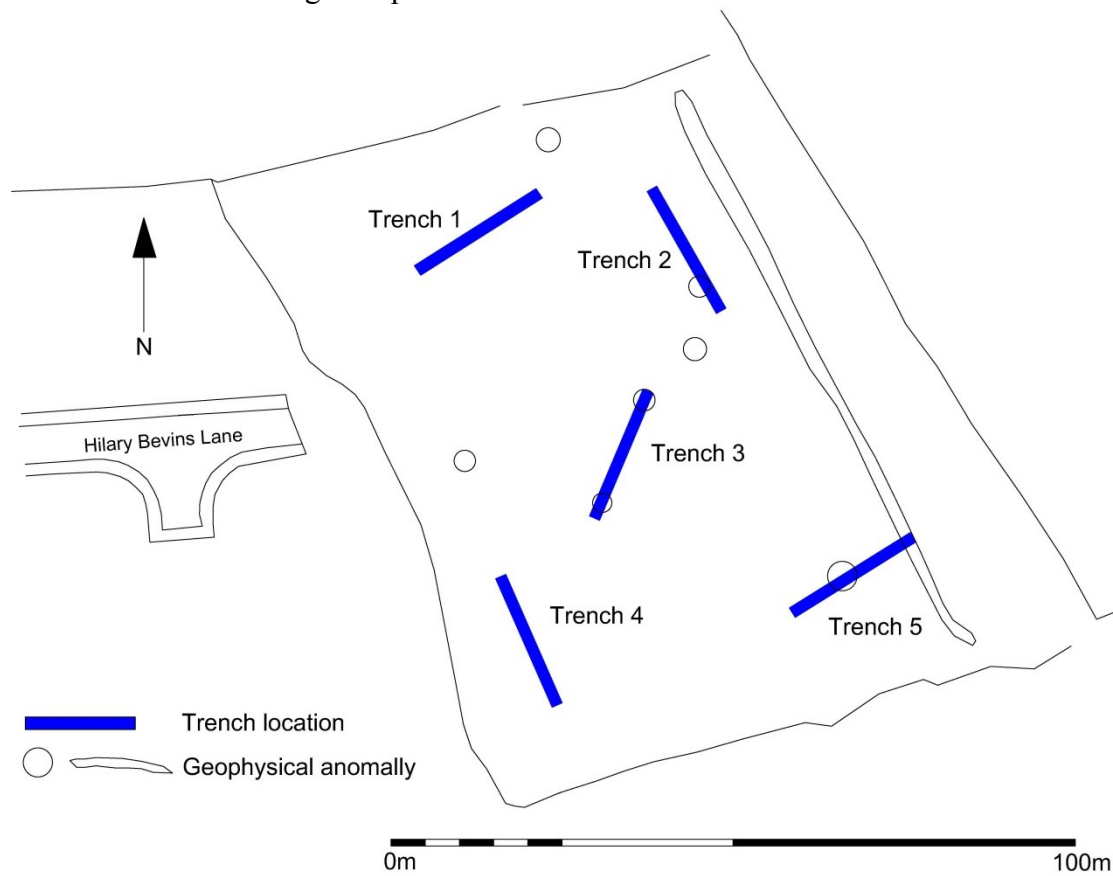


Figure 4. Actual trench locations

Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located at the northern end of the site and was set at 90 degrees to the surviving ridge and furrow. The surface of the field at this point, and for much of the field, was fairly waterlogged. Between 0.20m and 0.30m of mid brown clay-silt topsoil was removed to reveal between 0.11m and 0.25m of mid yellow brown clayey sandy silt subsoil. Removal of this layer exposed the natural substratum which consisted of a light yellow brown sandy clay-silt which had small chalky inclusions within it (Fig. 5). A thin interface of small sub-rounded stones was seen between the base of the subsoil and the natural substratum. Land drains were noted running along the plough furrows. The plough furrows were removed down to the substratum but no archaeological features or deposits were observed.



Figure 5. Trench 1
Looking east. 1m scale

Trench 2

Trench 2 was placed to run parallel to the ridge and furrow near to the eastern border of the site. The southern end of the trench was also laid out over a possible archaeological feature noted in the geophysical survey. The same topsoil and subsoil as noted in Trench 1 was observed in this trench and, indeed, in all five trenches. These layers also had similar depths across all trenches. The natural substratum was the same as in Trench 1 but had a slightly higher level of chalky inclusions within it. The stony interface between the subsoil and the natural substratum was noticeably thicker at about the point noted as a geophysical anomaly and it could be this phenomenon that produced the geophysical anomaly (Fig. 6). No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench.



Figure 6. Trench 2
Looking north. 1m scale.

Trench 3

This trench was located in the centre of the field along a south-west to north-east alignment. Two small geophysical anomalies were targeted. As noted the topsoil and subsoil in this trench were the same as in all other trenches. The natural substratum consisted of a similar sandy clay silt as was present in Trenches 1 and 2 but in this trench it was a slightly darker yellow brown. There were also patches of mid orange brown sandy clay within the sandy clay-silt at the north-east end (Fig. 7). At the south-west end the natural consisted entirely of mid orange brown sandy clay. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench and it seems likely that the geophysical anomalies are due to the changes in geology. Land drains were noted running across the trench following the line of the plough furrows.



Figure 7. Trench 3
Looking east. 1m scale

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located in the south-west corner of the site running on a roughly north to south alignment. The same pattern of topsoil, subsoil and natural substrata were observed in this trench. No archaeological features or deposits were present.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located near to the south-east corner of the site. A possible linear feature was highlighted in the geophysical survey running down the slope of the field along the eastern site boundary. This may relate to a hedge boundary as it follows the line of a footpath shown on the early Ordnance Survey maps. The topsoil and subsoil, despite being less waterlogged than elsewhere, appeared to be much softer around this trench. Most of the natural substratum consisted of a fairly loose mid reddish orange sandy clay which changed at the eastern end to much firmer sandy silty-clay and which might explain the geophysical anomaly (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. Trench 5
Looking west. 1m scale

Discussion

No archaeological features or deposits were noted in any of the trenches. The possible features identified in the geophysical survey are most likely to be due to changes in the natural geology especially in Trenches 2 and 3. The suggested boundary in Trench 5 is again more likely to be a natural feature identifying where the geology changes from softer sandy clay to firmer sandy silty-clay. This could also explain why a footpath was placed here originally.

Archive

The archive consists of:

This report,

5 pro-forma trench recording sheets,

1 combined photographic record sheet for digital and black and white photographs,

Contact sheet of 32 digital photographs,

Contact sheet for 21 35mm black and white photographs plus negatives,

CD of digital photographs.

Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

Acknowledgements

The project was managed by Dr Patrick Clay, the fieldwork was carried out by A Hyam. Thanks are due to Mark Stew for supply and operation of plant, also for organising additional background information and surveys.

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12.11.2012

Appendix 1. Trench Information

Trench No	Length (m)	Width (m)	Min Trench Depth (m)	Max Trench Depth (m)	Notes
1	21.0	1.60	0.32	0.52	No archaeology
2	20.5	1.60	0.47	0.53	No archaeology
3	20.1	1.60	0.43	0.55	No archaeology. Areas of differing geology
4	20.5	1.60	0.42	0.56	No archaeology. Areas of differing geology
5	20.8	1.60	0.42	0.61	No archaeology. Areas of differing geology

Appendix 2. OASIS Information

Project Name	Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	P Clay
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	Geophysical survey.
Current Land Use	Pasture
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	Pre-planning
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-planning
Site Co ordinates	SP 379 956
Start/end dates of field work	7.11.12 to 8.11.12
Archive Recipient	LCC
Study Area	0.9ha

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