



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

An archaeological excavation
on land at Strancliffe Hall,
Cotes Road,
Barrow-upon-Soar,
Leicestershire
SK 572 181

Leon Hunt



ULAS Report No 2014-107
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on land at Strancliffe Hall,
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Leicestershire
SK 572 181**

for

The Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP)

Checked by Project Manager

Signed:



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An archaeological excavation on land at Strancliffe Hall, Cotes Road, Barrow-upon-Soar, Leicestershire (SK 572 181)

Leon Hunt

Summary

An archaeological excavation was carried out on land at Strancliffe Hall, Cotes Road, Barrow-upon-Soar, Leicestershire by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS).

The work was commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) on behalf of Barwood Homes Ltd in advance of the development of the site for new housing.

Previous archaeological work on land to the north and east of the present site, by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2006, revealed Iron Age activity plus a significant amount of limestone kilns, dating from the post-medieval period to the modern period.

A previous archaeological evaluation on the present site carried out by ULAS in 2011 consisting of a geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation showed that there was significant potential for further lime kilns and other structures within the proposed development area.

The current work revealed quarrying and landscaping activity and only four kilns could be identified including one which had been heavily truncated. Three of these kilns were excavated and were shown to be clamp kilns similar to those revealed during the previous archaeological work here and also identical to those revealed on a site to the south-east of Barrow in 2013 (Hunt 2013).

No dating evidence was retrieved from two of the kilns, but the third was associated with a small pit, which contained 20th century pottery. The remains of a small building were also discovered during the excavation, but this too appeared modern in date.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP), on behalf of Barwood Homes Ltd, to carry out a programme of archaeological work, including the stripping of overburden down to archaeological levels and the excavation and recording of archaeological features, on land at Strancliffe Hall, Cotes Road, Barrow-upon-Soar, Leicestershire (NGR: SK 572 181).

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

The work was required as a condition of the planning consent, issued by Charnwood District Council for new housing on the site, which lies within the wider grounds of Strancliffe Hall and consists largely of open pasture.

Previous archaeological work on land to the north and east of the present site revealed Iron Age activity plus a significant amount of limestone kilns dating from the 15th to 19th centuries.

A previous archaeological evaluation on the present site consisting of a geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation showed that there was significant potential for further lime kilns and other structures within the proposed development area. No Iron Age activity was located during the evaluation (Harvey 2011).

Site Location, Geology and Topography

The Barrow-upon-Soar lies in the Charnwood District of Leicestershire, around 10 miles north of Leicester (Figure 1). The site lies on the northern side of the village, to the east of Cotes Road (formerly 'Catsick Lane'), within the grounds of Strancliffe Hall. The Hall grounds cover 4.6 hectares; the archaeological study area itself lies on the western part of the site and consists of a rectangular area measuring around 100m x 150m, oriented north-east to south-west. A sewer pipe crosses the site from north north-east to south south-west and effectively divided the stripped areas into two triangular areas; for identification purposes these are referred to as Area 1 (west) and Area 2 (east).



Figure 1: Site Location

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The land is surrounded by thick tree cover to the west and north and there is a perimeter wall beyond the trees. Cotes Road lies to the east and Strancliffe Lane to the north. To the south and east lie more of the land associated with the Hall, with the Hall and gardens itself to the south-east (Figure 2).

The land was covered in pasture prior to the archaeological stripping, with a number of clumps of trees, most of which had been felled prior to the excavation.

The British Geological Survey of the site indicates that the underlying geology was likely to be Barnstone Member limestone and mudstone, overlain by Thrussington Member Diamicton of sand, clay and silt.

The land falls gently from east to west from around 67m aOD to 63m aOD.

Archaeological Objectives and Methodology

The investigation will record the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of all archaeological remains encountered, as dictated by current best practice and will:

- Record the nature of the main stratigraphic units encountered in terms of their physical composition (stone, sand, gravel, organic materials etc.) and their archaeological formation (primary deposits, secondary deposits etc.);
- Assess the overall presence and survival of any structural remains relating to the main periods of occupation revealed, as well as the potential for the recovery of additional structural information given the nature of the deposits encountered (e.g. extent of later disturbance etc.);
- Assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of artefactual evidence (including pottery, brick, tile, stone, glass, metal, bone, small finds, industrial residues etc.), its condition, given the nature of the deposits encountered; and
- Assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of ecofactual and environmental evidence (including animal bone, human bone, plant remains, pollen, charcoal, molluscs, soils etc.), its condition and potential, given the nature of the deposits encountered.

During both the excavation and post-excavation process, the research aims stated above will be reviewed and refined and new ones identified on the basis of the evidence recovered from the excavation.

The main objective of the archaeological excavation is to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any significant archaeology on the site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The project will be managed by a Member of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and the following guidelines and standards for archaeological fieldwork will be adhered to during the execution of the investigation:

- Institute for Archaeologists - Code of Conduct (revised April 2010);
- Institute for Archaeologists - Standard and guidance for archaeological field excavations (revised October 2008); and
- English Heritage - Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2) (1991)

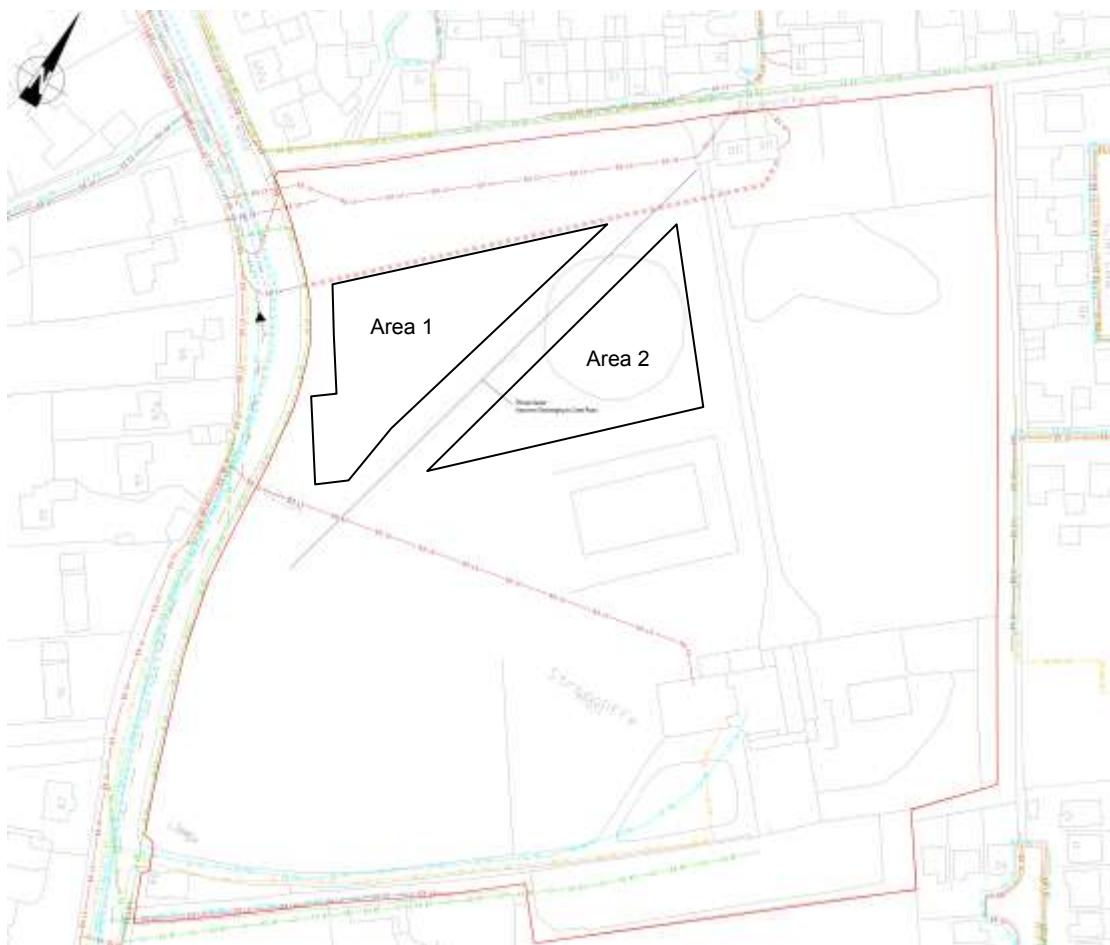


Figure 2: Plan of Strancliffe Hall, showing two areas stripped for excavation,
provided by client. Scale 1: 1250

Archaeological Background

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment was carried out for the site by EDP in 2011. This identified one Heritage Asset within the development area itself: Strancliffe Hall, although it will not be directly affected by the current archaeological work.

Excavations to the north and east of Strancliffe Hall, particularly those carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2006 (McAree 2007) revealed an Iron Age settlement with roundhouses and field boundary ditches.

The excavations also revealed many limestone kilns, including clamp kilns, dating from a range of dates from A.D 1475 to A.D 1600. Linear kilns of similar date were also discovered along with brick lined kilns from A.D 1700 to A.D 1870.

A geophysical survey was carried out on the present site and the land to the south by Archaeological Services WYAS. The survey revealed many magnetic disturbances associated with possible kiln activity and other industrial activity on the present site, plus quarrying to the south.

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by ULAS in 2011 (Harvey 2011) and revealed a number of small modern gullies and general disturbance on the southern area and two clamp kilns within the current study area, one of which was excavated. No dating evidence was retrieved during the evaluation for the kilns.

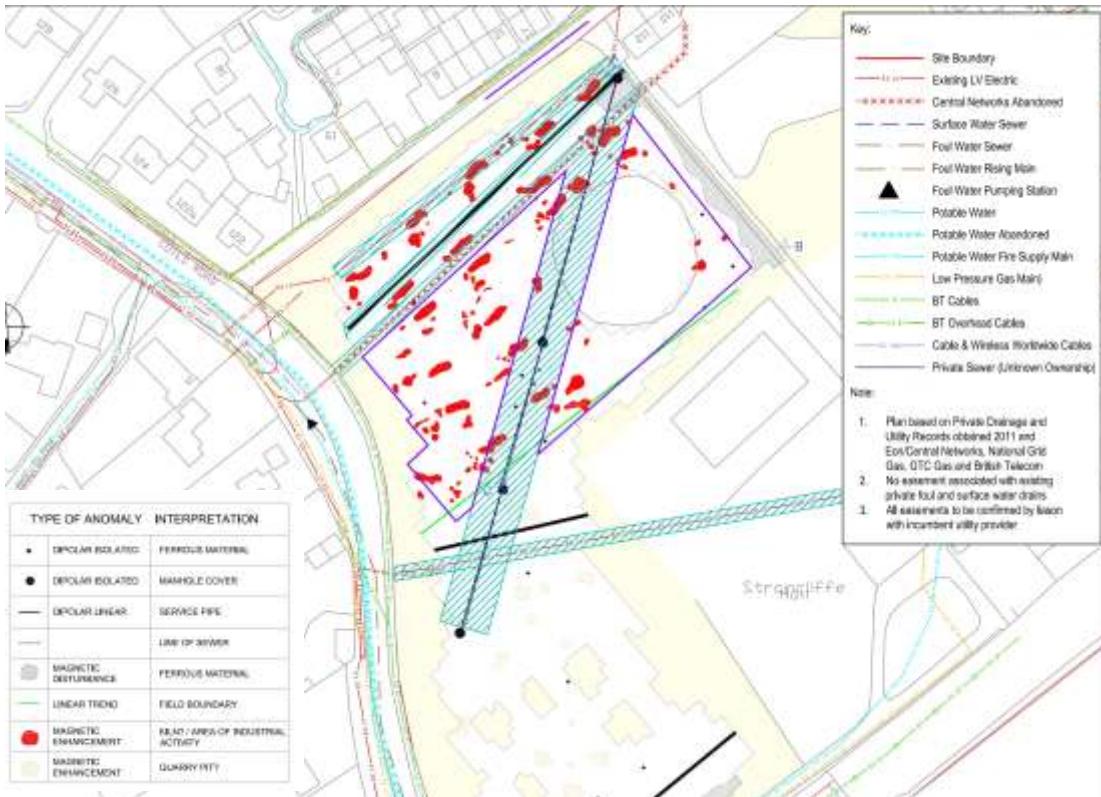


Figure 3: Plan of site showing results of geophysical survey, provided by client.
Scale 1: 1250

Recent archaeological work to the south-east of the village along Melton Road, consisting of 26 evaluation trenches revealed many clamp kilns of which three were excavated. No dating evidence was recovered during the excavations, but from local knowledge it is known that lime production at this site continued into the early 20th century (Hunt 2013).

Results

The work was undertaken between 29th May and 12th June 2014. The upper soil layers were stripped by a large tracked excavator, assisted by a small dumper truck to remove the spoil. Topsoil and subsoil were removed separately and the respective soils dumped separately (Plate 1).

An exclusion zone of approximately 10m was left each side of the sewer, which ran across the site from north-east to south-west.

Although most of the trees on the eastern side of the site had been felled prior to the excavation, a number still remained and as it was unclear whether these had been left in for a purpose they were avoided and the decision taken on site to narrow Area 2 by a few metres to avoid them.

The areas were stripped to archaeological layers or the natural sub-stratum, whichever was the higher in the sequence. The soil sequence largely consisted of 0.15m to 0.25m of very dark silty clay topsoil, with small and medium angular stones lying over 0.1m to 0.15m of yellowish brown silty clay subsoil, with charcoal flecks and angular stones. The soil was thicker on Area 1, with a total depth of around 0.30m to 0.40m,

with the soil thinner on Area 2 at around 0.25m depth. This suggests that over time there has been some movement of soil as the land slopes down to the west.

The natural sub-stratum was very mixed and in places is likely to have been redeposited due to quarrying and other human activities. The sub-stratum consisted of red clay and yellowish brown and grey clay, with patches of grey siltstone, limestone chunks and gravelly clay areas.

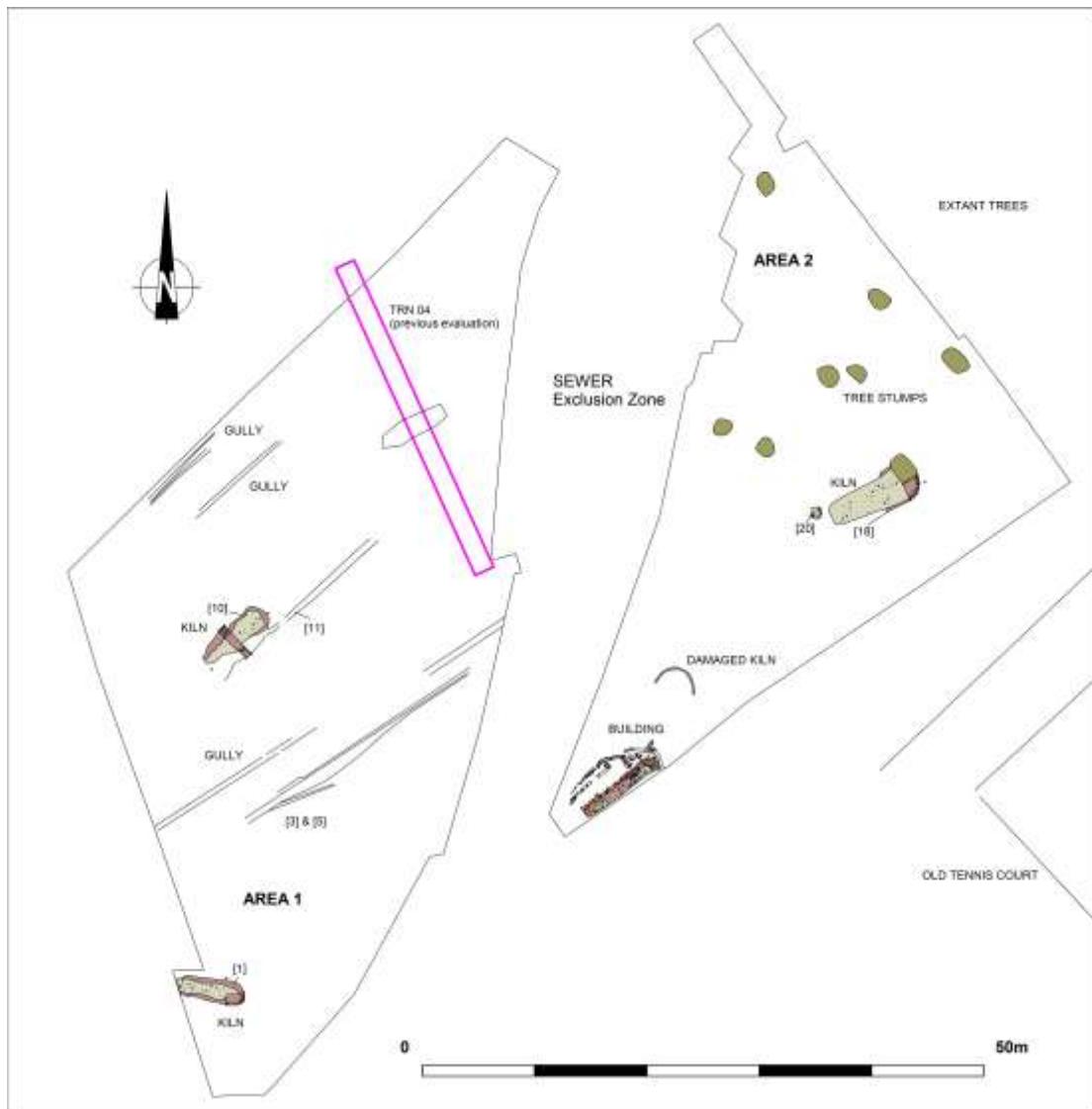


Figure 4: Plan of site showing features identified

There were also areas within both parts of the site where the land dropped into shallow hollows, which were filled with silty subsoil to a depth of around 0.20m to 0.30m. These may be natural depressions, but could also represent quarrying.

A number of shallow gullies of variable width ran broadly from east to west, often varying in width from a metre wide to 0.20m. Some of these were sampled and were seen to be between 0.10m and 0.35m deep and filled with yellowish brown silty clay with numerous pieces of modern brick, pebbles and slag. Gully [2] was 0.6m wide and 0.35m deep with very steep sides and a narrow concave base. The fill (3) was a mid yellowish brown silty clay with a large amount of brick fragments, slag and rounded pebbles. Another gully [4] ran parallel to [2] but was only 0.4m wide and

0.18m deep, with fairly steep sides and a narrow concave base. The fill (5) was identical to (3) but with far fewer stones and brick inclusions (Figure 5 & Plate 2).

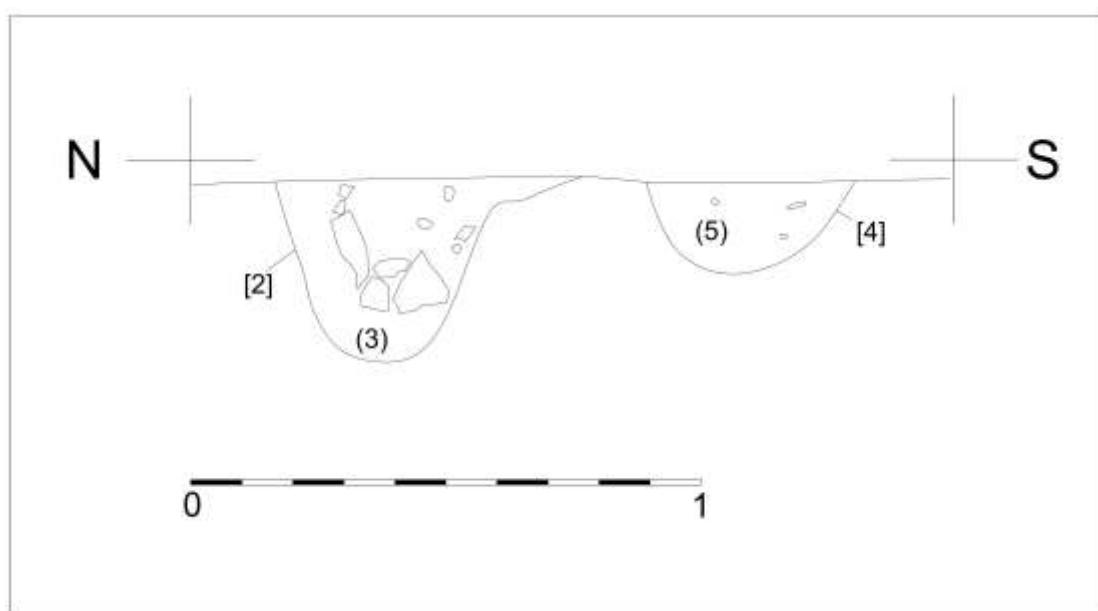


Figure 5: West facing section of gullies [2] and [4]

A trial trench from the previous evaluation (Trench 4), which contained two kilns, one of which was excavated, was identified close to the northern edge of excavation in Area 1. The unexcavated kiln [15] within this trench was identified. Other features could not be identified.

Apart from the kilns from the previous evaluation, only four clamp kilns were identified during the excavation; two in Area 1 and two in Area 2. Three of these were partially excavated.

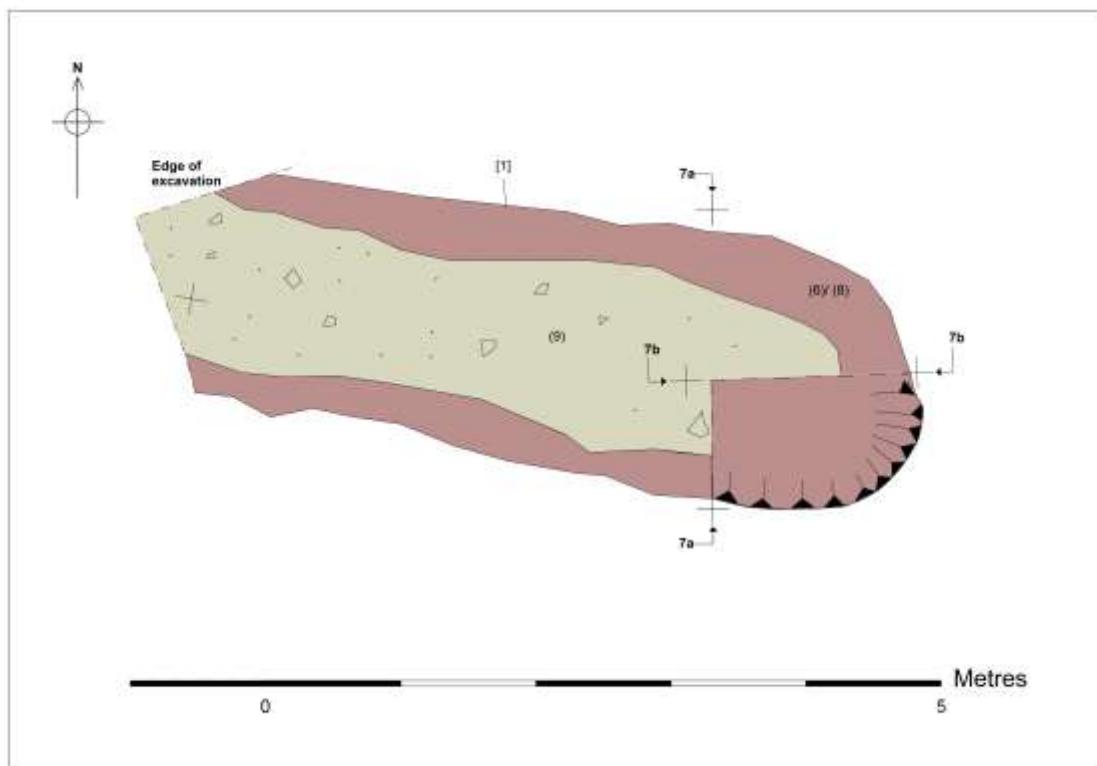


Figure 6: Plan of kiln [1]

The first kiln lay in the south-western corner of the site, partially obscured by the baulk. The kiln was at least 6m long, oriented east-west, and was 2m wide at the east end (from the edges of the burnt clay that surrounded it) and 1.2m at the western end near the baulk (Figure 6 & Plate 3). The cut [1] was lozenge shaped, with very steep sides. The cut was difficult to determine as it had been cut into the natural clay and siltstone and the surrounding natural had been stained red by burning, leaving a 0.25m 'halo' of red around the edges of the structure. The base of the kiln was flattish and uneven at around 0.35m depth.

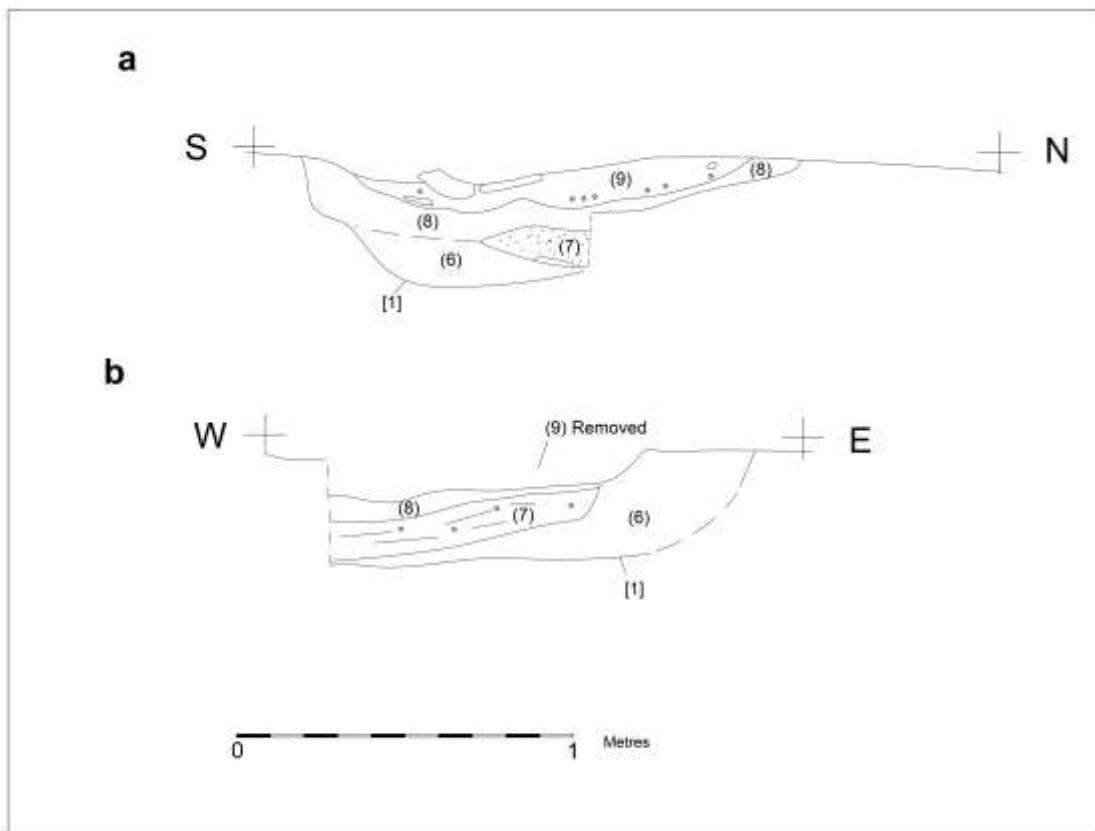


Figure 7: East facing and south facing sections for kiln [1]

Most of the base and sides of the structure was burnt orange red silty clay around 0.13m in thickness (6). Some of this may be fill or collapsed structure, but much of it was likely to be burnt natural sub-stratum surrounding the kiln. On top of this lay a layer of creamy grey and mid grey burnt limestone and fuel ash that was very compacted (7). Above this was another layer of orange red mottled with greyish red silty clay (8), which was similar to the lower layer (6).

Above this was a later infill of reddish brown and creamy grey silty clay, with pieces of limestone and other angular stone pieces (9). This fill made up most of the visible structure, in plan, of the kiln, with the red halo of clay, (6) or (8), around the edges (Figure 7).

No dating evidence was retrieved from this feature.

Close to the centre of Area 1 was a second kiln. This was also oriented east to west and was at least 7m long, being cut and obscured by a shallow ditch [11] along the western and southern edges (Figure 8).

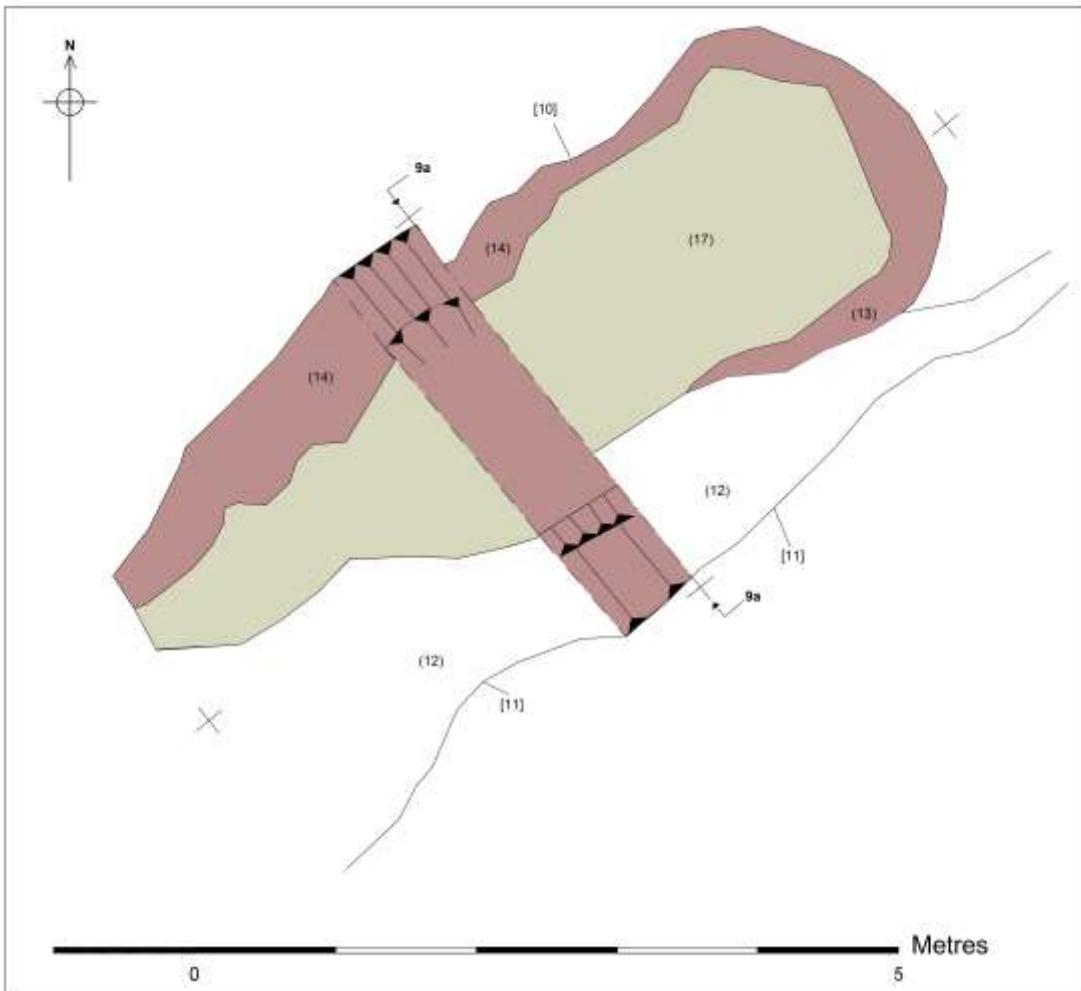


Figure 8: Plan of kiln [10]

The burnt area around the kiln was 2.3m wide at the eastern end and consisted of a cut [10], which once again was difficult to determine due to the burnt clay, but appeared to be around 0.6m deep, lozenge shaped with a steep south side and a shallower northern side.

The main fill at the base was mottled orange red and reddish brown silty clay and clay mix with small pieces of limestone, which was soft but also quite compacted (13). On the northern edge this layer was also blackened in places and although a distinct layer horizon could not be seen clearly, this layer was given a separate context number (14), although this is likely to represent burnt natural. Above these layers in the centre of the structure was a layer of creamy brown compacted, almost solid, fuel ash and limestone (15), which was around 1m wide and 0.2m depth in its centre.

Above this was a crumbly mixed layer of brownish red and orange red clay, silty clay and limestone (16), which was also around 0.2m deep. Above this was the final infill of mottled greyish yellow and yellowish grey silty clay and clayey silt, with small to medium angular and sub-rounded stones (17). Once again this fill made up most of the visible structure of the kiln as seen in plan, with the halo of burnt clay (13), (14) and (16) around the edges.

This kiln had been cut along its southern and western edges by a very variable ditch or gully that ran across the site from east to west (10). The linear feature was not

particularly straight and varied between 0.2m wide and 1.2m wide. Where it cut the kiln it was 0.8m wide and 0.14m deep, with shallow sides and an uneven flattish base. The fill of the gully (12) was a greyish brown silty clay with some small stones (Figure 9 & Plate 4).

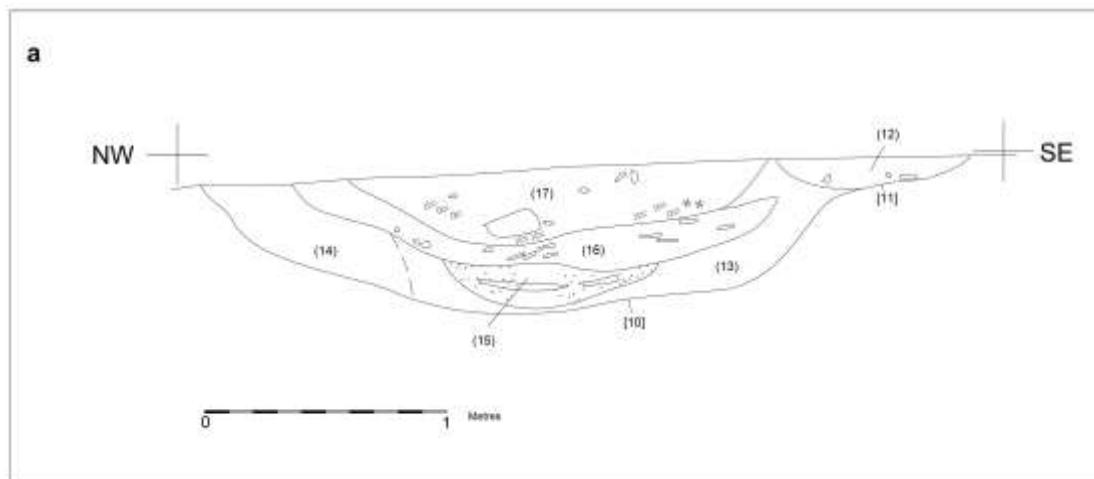


Figure 9: South-west facing section of features [10] and [11]

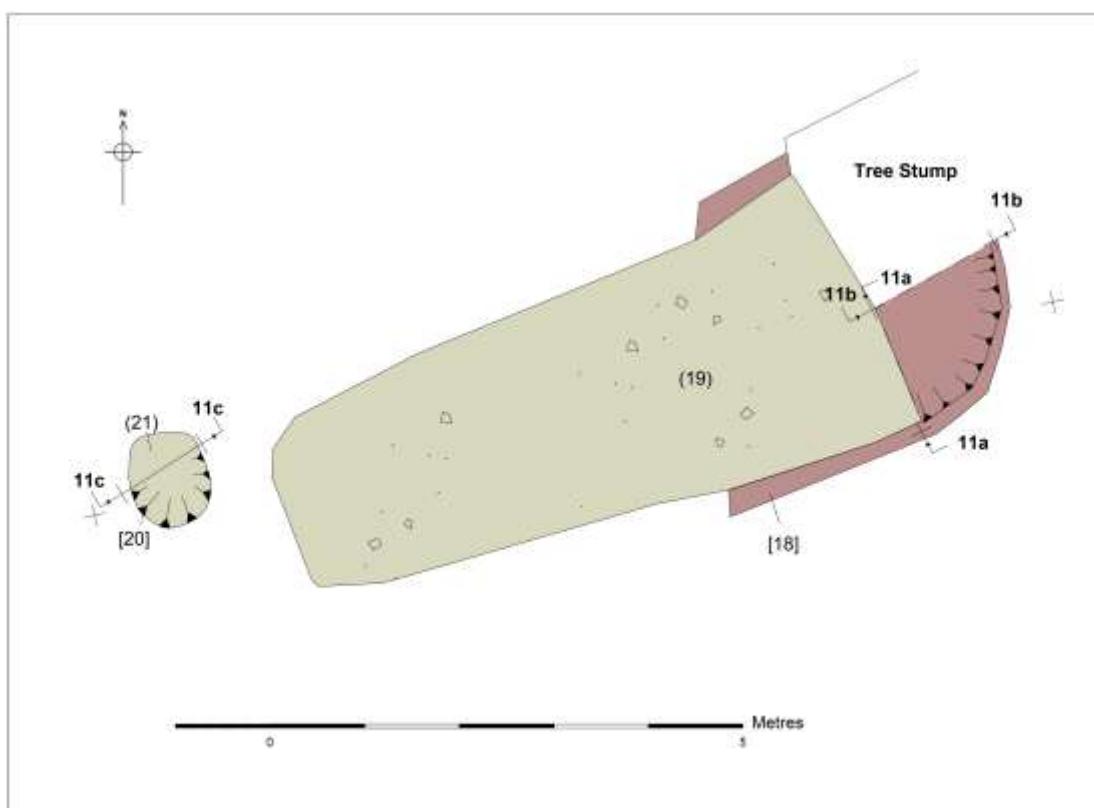


Figure 10: Plan of kiln [18]

A large kiln measuring 8.5m by 3.5m lay close to the centre of Area 2. This had partially been destroyed by a tree along the north-eastern edge (Figure 10). The kiln structure consisted of an apparent cut [18], which was sub-rectangular in plan with very steep sides and a flattish base at around 0.60m depth, although the base and the sides were difficult to identify from the surrounding burnt natural clay. The fill (19)

appeared to consist of a single context of a mid reddish brown silty clay with occasional coal flecks and lumps of limestone (Plate 5). Not all the fill was removed (Figure 11a)

To the west of the kiln was a possible stoke pit [20], which was sub-circular measuring 0.9m by 0.5m and was 0.16m deep with shallow sides and an uneven concave base. The fill (21) was a mottled blue-grey and reddish brown silty clay with small fragments of limestone and other angular stones (Figure 11b). The fill contained pottery of fine earthenware, which was 20th century in date.

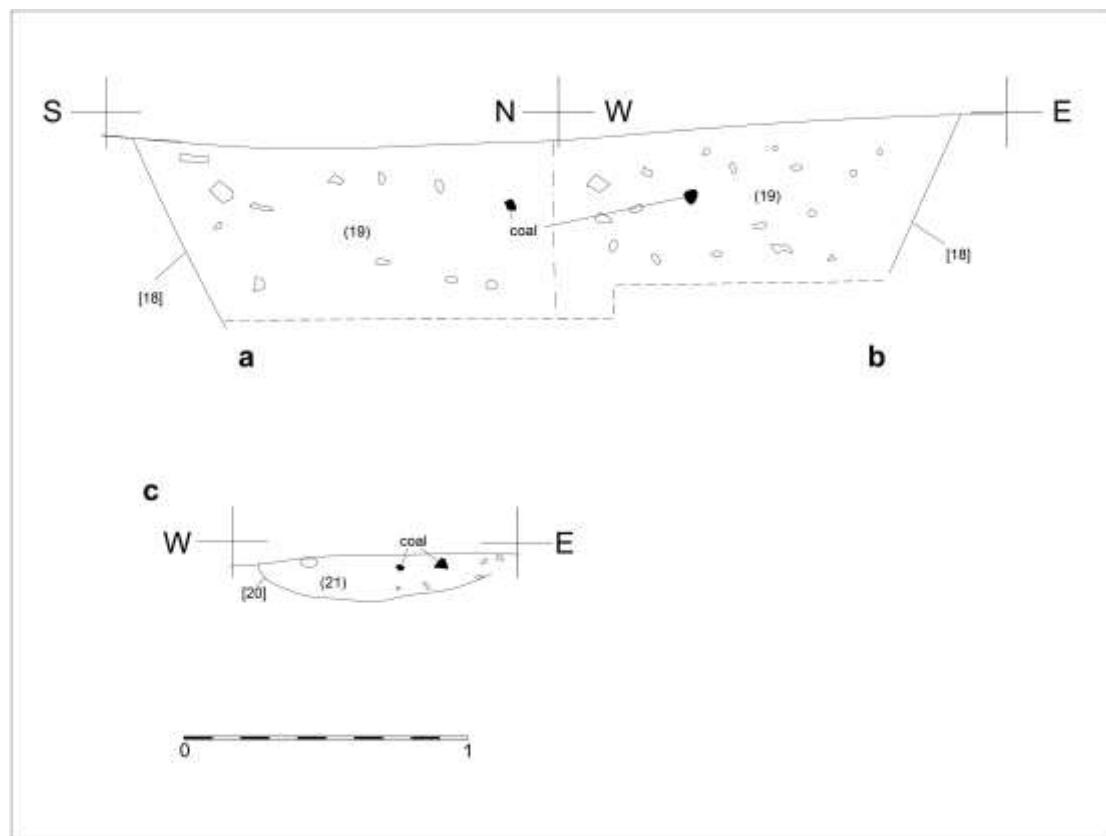


Figure 11: Combined east facing and south facing sections for kiln [18] and south facing section of pit [20]

A further partial kiln was identified close to the southern end of Area 2, which was not excavated.

The remnants of a building were identified close to the south-western corner of Area 2 (Figure 11). The building consisted of a robbed out wall foundation and remnants of mortared floors, part of a yard surface and several drains, brick and stone which drained off to the south-west. The fills of the drains contained early 20th century pottery and clay pipe fragments.

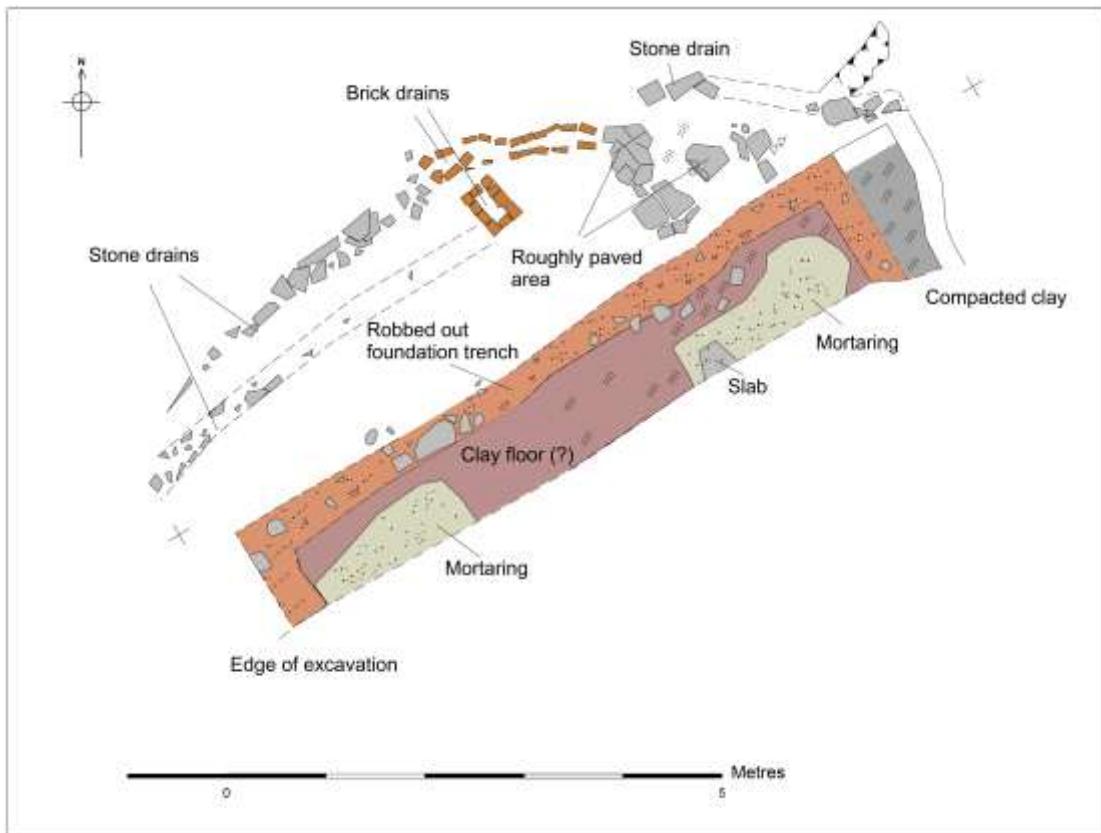


Figure 12: Plan of building in Area 2

Conclusion

The geophysical survey and evaluation carried out prior to the present excavations highlighted the possible presence of a large number of clamp kilns in this area around Strancliffe Hall, with the possibility of more sophisticated kilns and other features. The excavations revealed very few further clamp kilns to those discovered in the 2011 evaluations.

The three kilns that were excavated were very similar in design to those discovered during the previous evaluation and the excavations carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2006 nearby (McAree 2006). They were also almost identical to those excavated by ULAS on the site at Melton Road in 2013 (Hunt 2013).

The kilns consisted of a lozenge shaped pit around 7m long, excavated to around 0.3m-0.6m in depth and filled presumably with layers of fuel (coal or wood) and limestone. This was then fired, most likely from a pit at one end (mainly to the south or west of the kiln) and then the lime would have been cleared out and the kiln used again, which would account for the compacted limestone and ash in the centre of the kiln (fills (7) and (15) in kilns [1] and [10] respectively), which may be the remnants of previous firings.

Kiln [18] was slightly larger and contained no evidence of ash or limestone. This kiln may have failed and was not reused. However, of the three kilns excavated during this work this was the only one to be associated with a stoke pit. From this pit modern pottery was discovered giving an early 20th century date for the filling in of the pit. This is curious as the land here appears to be parkland associated with Strancliffe Hall since at least the late 19th century.

Other features on the site include a large number of small and variable gullies running east to west across the western part of the site. These are undoubtedly modern, containing large quantities of modern brick and rubble, and most likely have been used to drain the higher lying land to the east.

The remains of a structure, presumably a small building, were discovered in the south-west corner of Area 2. The structure consisted of a robbed out wall, with an interior surface and an external yard surface and a number of brick and stone drains containing clay pipes and pottery which are all modern in date.

This was presumably a small agricultural building, but none is shown on early mapping of the area.

The excavations at Strancliffe Hall have confirmed the results of the previous evaluation, but have shown that the geophysical survey results may have been slightly over interpreted as very few clamp kilns were discovered during this work. However, quarrying and more recent landscaping and drainage activity across the site have more than likely contributed to the destruction of kilns and other features.

The results of the excavation confirm that the Iron Age activity revealed by the archaeological work to the east and north of the site does not extend into the present area.

References

- Harvey, J., 2011 *An Archaeological Evaluation at Strancliffe Hall, Cotes Road, Barrow Upon Soar, Leicestershire (SP 572 181)* (ULAS Report 2011-135)
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- Lewis, D., *Strancliffe Hall, Barrow-upon-Soar, Leicestershire: Archaeological Assessment* (EDP Report EDP1178_01a)
- McAree, D., 2006 *Archaeological Excavation at Cotes Road, Barrow upon Soar, Leicestershire* (Northamptonshire Archaeology Report No. 07/148)

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Barwood Homes and Jo Vallender of EDP for their help and co-operation with this project. The project was managed by Patrick Clay of ULAS and the fieldwork was carried out by the author, assisted by James Patrick.

The machine and dumper were supplied by Planters Ltd and were driven by Steve Wright, Richard Clark and Simon Bates.

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	Strancliffe Hall, Cotes Road, Barrow upon Soar
Project Type	Excavation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Leon Hunt
Previous/Future work	Geophysical survey/ evaluation
Current Land Use	Pasture
Development Type	Housing
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition
Site Co ordinates	SK 572 181
Start/end dates of field work	29-05-2014 to 12-06-2014
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums
Study Area	4.6ha

Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A83.2014

The archive consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (2014-107)
- 19 Context Sheets
- 4 sheets of permatrace with primary drawings
- 2 Contact sheets of digital photographs
- 1 CD digital photographs
- 1 Set B&W contact sheets
- 1 Set B&W negatives

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02-07-2014



Plate 1: Work in progress stripping Area 2, looking south-west



Plate 2: Gullies across Area 1, looking east



Plate 3: Pre-excavation view of kiln [1], looking west



Plate 4: Kiln [10], cut by ditch [11], south-west facing section, looking north-east



Plate 5: Kiln [18], north-east facing section, looking south-west



Plate 6: Remnants of building, Area 2, looking south

Appendix: The Post Roman Pottery

Deborah Sawday

The Finds

The pottery, seven sherds, weighing 114 grams, was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group, (MPRG 1998; MPRG 2001) and the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999). Two tobacco pipe stems in china clay were also present.

The results are shown below (table 1). All the finds were 20th century in date.

Bibliography

Davies, S., and Sawday, D., 1999 ‘The Post Roman Pottery and Tile’ in A. Connor and R. Buckley, 1999, *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*, Leicester Archaeology Monograph 5, 165-213.

MPRG, 1998 *A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms*. Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper 1, London.

MPRG, 2001. *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Saxon and Medieval Ceramics*

Table 1: The pottery and miscellaneous finds by fabric/ware, number and weight (grams) by context.

Context	Fabric/ware	No.	Gr	Comments
POT				
21	EA10 - Fine White Earthenware/China	2	6	Two burnt base fragments with foot-ring. Modern
Drain/ Building	EA2 – Earthenware 2	3	53	Joining sherds internally slipped and glazed bowl rim and upper body. The rim is everted & externally thickened. A Similar form was dated to the 20th century at Causeway Lane, Leicester (Davies and Sawday 1999, fig.97.178).
Drain/ Building	EA2 – Earthenware 2	1	36	Body – slipped and glazed on interior.
Drain/ Building	EA10 - Fine White Earthenware/China	1	19	Plate rim, transfer printed blue under glaze. Modern.
TOBACCO PIPE				
Drain/ Building	China Clay	2		Pipe stems – modern.

Site/ Parish: Cotes Road, Barrow Upon Soar, Leics. Accession No.: XA83 2014 Document Ref: barrow on soar4.docx Material: pot/clay pipe Site Type: lime kilns	Submitter: L. Hunt Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Identification: 30.06.2014 Method of Recovery: excavation Job Number:
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