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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
the Science and Enterprise Park,
Ashby Road, Loughborough,
Leicestershire (SK 583 183)**




Roger Kipling

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**An Archaeological Evaluation
at the Science and Enterprise Park,
Ashby Road,
Loughborough, Leicestershire
(SK 583 183)**

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For: Loughborough University

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[NGR: SK 56045 17321]

Roger Kipling

Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken in November 2013 at land on the south side of Ashby Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Loughborough University. The fieldwork was undertaken as post-determination response to an application for Science and Enterprise Park and following a desk-based assessment and a geophysical survey in order to assess the potential impact of the development on any archaeological remains as may have been present.

The first part of the archaeological evaluation, comprising five 30m by 2.1m trenches of the eastern field, at Ashby Roads, Loughborough, revealed no indications of archaeological activity, with the exception of medieval plough furrows.

The site archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A186. 2013.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land on the south side of Ashby Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire. A desk-based assessment (Bocock 2006) had established that the assessment area was in the vicinity of a number of medieval sites and a single Roman site, whilst the geophysical survey identified geophysical anomalies of possible archaeological origin (Haddrell 2006).

In consequence the Principal Planning Archaeologist (PPA), Historic & Natural Environment Team (HNET), Leicestershire County Council, recommended the need for a further 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 (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 November 2013 and involved the machine excavation of five trial trenches in order to provide the 2% sample of the development area requested by the Leicestershire County Council Senior Planning Archaeologist as advisor to the planning authority.

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 followed 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 comprises two arable fields located to the east of Snell's Nook Lane and south of the Ashby Road on the western edge of Loughborough (centred on NGR SK 402 133). The site is flanked to the southeast by Holywell Business Park and covers an area of approximately 2.5 ha. at a height of approximately 80m OD. At the time of the archaeological evaluation, the eastern field was under pasture, whilst the western field was under crop and consequently could not be investigated.

The British Geological Survey (www.bgs.ac.uk) records the bedrock below the site as the Tarporely Siltstone Formation overlain by superficial glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits.

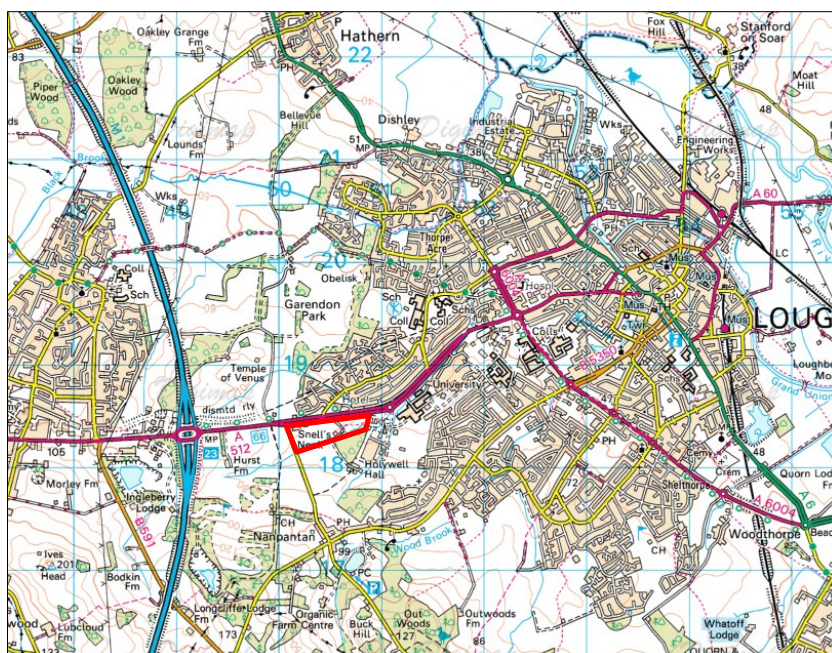


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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Archaeological and Historical Background

Archaeological Background

A desk based assessment was undertaken for the area (Bocock 2006). The Historic Environment Record (HER) for the area shows that there are no known archaeological sites in the assessment area itself. However, there are a few archaeological sites in the vicinity of the assessment area and these are summarised below.

Various medieval archaeological sites and one Roman site have been recorded within the proposed development area. Part of a moat surrounding Holywell Hall is located within the development area (**MLE636**). There is also a two storey brick house with 16th century doorway and arch (**MLE637**). There is documentary evidence for a church or chapel within the development area (**MLE638**). In addition, a medieval barn with cruck construction is located within the area (**MLE639**). There is a documentary reference to a *Vercarium*, or possibly *Bercarium*, in 1240 which may have been a hermitage or sheepcote (**MLE640**). Earl's Dyke is partially located within the development area, and was constructed in the early 12th century to delineate the hunting areas of three feuding lords (**MLE9791**). Holywell Farmhouse dating to the 15th/16th century (**MLE13425**) with an associated medieval outbuilding (**MLE13426**). A mid-18th century landscaped park, which was a replacement and extension of a medieval park, is located 45m to the north of the proposed development area (**MLE578**).

Two coins of Marcus Aurelius and a selection of Roman pottery were found within the development area (**MLE645**). An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Holywell Hall in 1990, in advance of the construction of a research station for British Gas. This included the survey of surviving earthworks, test pits and trial excavations. The earthworks showed a series of 'house' platforms and associated ridge and furrow field systems adjacent to a moated site which was not affected by the development. Trial trenches suggested that these were of medieval date and represented gardens enclosed by ditches. One medieval wall footing was located. A few early Saxon sherds suggested activity from this period.

The HER lists one prehistoric archaeological site in the vicinity of the proposed development area. An Iron Age or Roman beehive quern was found 285m to the north of the proposed development (**MLE6556**).

Potentially two Roman sites have been recorded in the vicinity of the development area. Large quantities of Roman coins, pottery, a spoon and a possible Roman lead weight indicate an occupation site *c.* 400m to the south of the development (**MLE641**). At the same location an undated ditch was recorded (**MLE642**).

There are three post-medieval structures included in the HER in the vicinity of the proposed development area. The line of the Charnwood Forest Line Canal passes along the southern boundary of the development area (**MLE9782**). The Lodge at Garendon Park is located 45m to the north of the development area (**MLE13418**). Burleigh Farmhouse is located 45m to the southeast of the development (**MLE13448**).

Historical Background

Loughborough is referred to in the Domesday Book as land owned by Earl Hugh. There were “8 villagers with 15 Freemen and 16 smallholders owning 12 ½ ploughs, two mills at 10 shillings; meadow 45 acres; woodland 7 furlongs long and 3 furlongs wide. Five thane held them freely”. The name Loughborough appears to mean “fortified house of a man called Luhhede.

The earliest documentary reference to Holywell Haw dates to 1330. Holy Well Haw means 'an enclosure around the holy well' and suggests that some form of worship, pilgrimage, and/or a building, once existed at the site. The Holy Well Haw has a unique legend associated with it, in the form of a poem which tells of the safe rescue of a lady by a hermit at the holy well.

Loughborough University originated from the Loughborough Technical Institute, set up by Leicestershire County Council in 1909 to provide local facilities for further education. During the First World War the Technical Institute became an 'Instructional Factory' for the Ministry of Munitions. It was renamed as Loughborough College in 1920 and expanded. It widened its reputation beyond engineering to athletics, handicrafts and teacher training. In 1951-2 the College was divided into four separate institutions reflecting its main areas of interest. The College of Technology 1957 was designated a College of Advanced Technology in 1957. In 1966 it was granted university status and received a royal charter as Loughborough University of Technology. In 1977 the original structure was partly restored when the University and the College of Education were amalgamated.

The geophysical survey identified a few possible discrete and linear anomalies of possible archaeological origin. Of note to the centre of the eastern area is an enclosure likely to be of Iron Age or Roman date.

Aims and Objectives

The archaeological evaluation had the potential to contribute to the following research aims.

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 site 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.

Medieval (Lewis 2006; Knight et al 2012)

- The area lies close to the medieval site of Holywell 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 evaluation was undertaken in order to 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.

The design 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 Trenches

Prior to the commencement of works a Leicestershire County Council Museums Accession Code was obtained and the required archive deposition forms completed. An OASIS online record was initiated and the key fields completed.

Following recommendations from the Charnwood Borough Council, a programme of evaluation trenching was undertaken.

A 2% sample of the anomalies and 1% sample of the remaining area covering *c.* 920m² of trenching, the equivalent of 17 30m by 1.8m trenches, was required by the site design specification document. However, the presence of crop in the western field prevented the opening of nine trenches targeting possible archaeological features as signified by geophysical survey anomalies. A further two trenches were excluded as occupying land in the eastern corner of the site now occupied by car parking. Hence the area of investigation was significantly reduced to five of the intended 17 trenches. It is anticipated that additional fieldwork will be required at a future date in order to investigate the western field.

Topsoil and overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (*c.*2.1m 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. A CAT scanning device was used before and throughout machining in order to monitor for the presence of cables and other services.

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 loosely compacted.

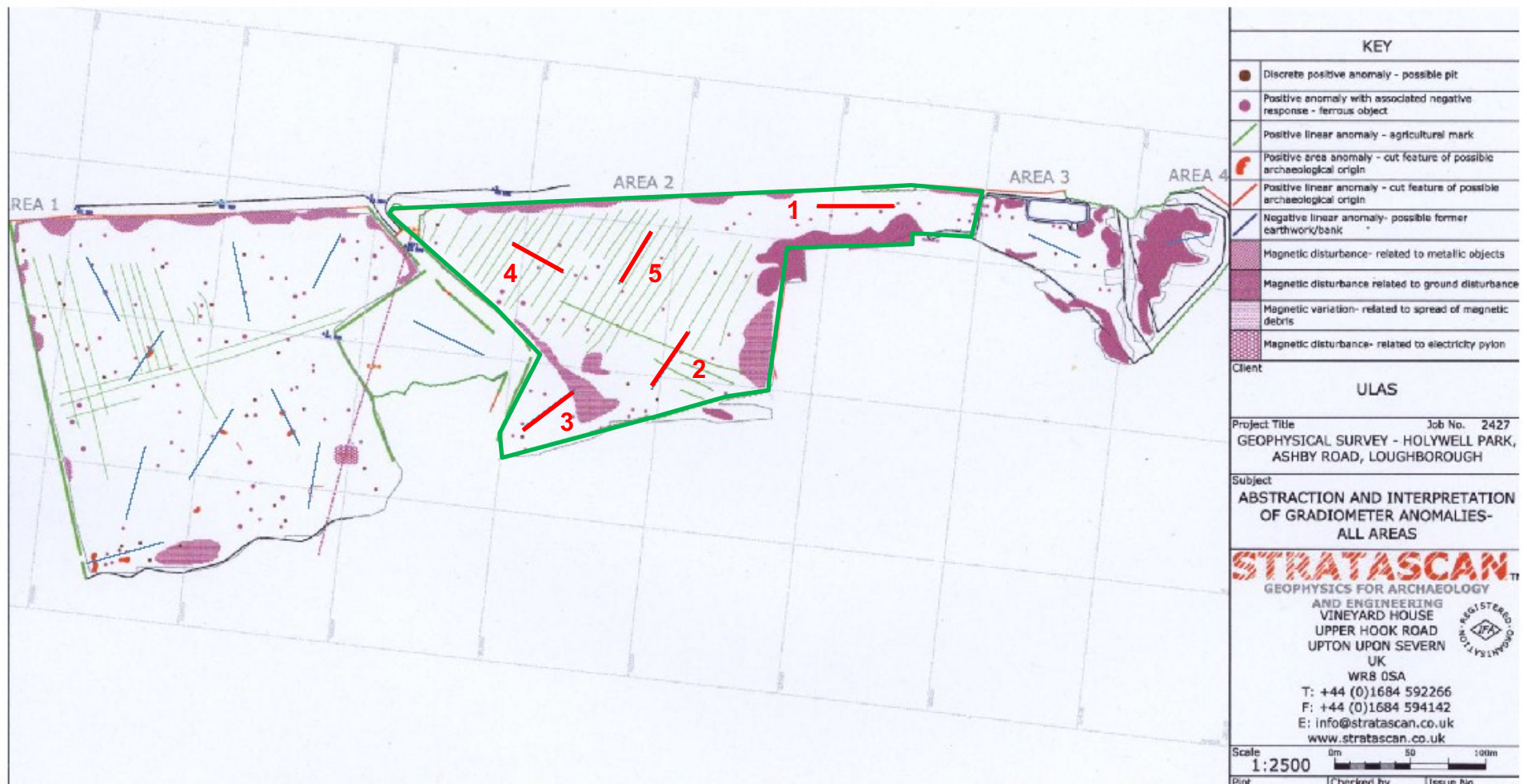


Figure 2: Geophysical survey results with area of investigation (in green) and trench locations

Results

Trench 1 was located at the eastern end of the development area in rough ground adjacent to Oakwood Drive (Figure 3). Machining of the trench (30m x 2.10m x 0.72m-1.35m in depth and aligned east-west) revealed a thin 0.15m-0.40m topsoil and underlying 0.80m-1.09m accumulation of pale reddish-brown clay silt with abundant modern building rubble, representing upcast from the development of the adjacent business park. The underlying dull reddish-brown natural clay was cut by three medieval plough furrows running diagonally northeast-southwest across the trench and tallying with furrows identified to the west in the geophysical survey.



Figure 3: Trench 1: general view east (1m scale)

The remaining trenches (**2-5**) were located in the open grassland to the west. All revealed the same sequence of 0.13m-0.35m of mid grey-brown clay loam topsoil and 0.08m-0.43m of pale orange-brown clay silt subsoil overlying dull reddish-brown and pale yellow-brown clay with intermittent mudstone patches (Figures 4 & 5). None provided indications of archaeology.



Figure 4: Trench 2; general view northeast (1m scale)



Figure 5: Trench 5; general view south (1m scale)

Discussions & Conclusion

The archaeological evaluation at Ashby Road, Loughborough, provided no indications archaeological activity, with the sole exception of medieval plough furrows in Trench 1. It is anticipated that additional fieldwork will be required at a future date in order to investigate the western field.

TRENCH	ORIENTATION	LENGTH AND WIDTH (metres)	DESCRIPTION	DEPTH (MIN-MAX metres)
1	E-W	30 x 2.10	Topsoil 0.15-0.40m, subsoil 0.32-1.0. No archaeological finds or features.	0.72-1.35
2	NE-SW	30 x 2.10	Topsoil 0.13-0.33m, subsoil 0.08-0.24m. No archaeological finds or features.	0.22-0.75
3	NE-SW	30 x 2.10	Topsoil 0.23-0.38m, subsoil 0.18-0.43m. No archaeological finds or features.	0.43-0.81
4	NW-SE	30 x 2.10	Topsoil 0.20-0.30m, subsoil 0.21-0.30m. No archaeological finds or deposits.	0.50-0.61
5	NE-SW	30 x 2.10	Topsoil 0.22-0.35m, subsoil 0.18-0.28m. No archaeological finds or deposits.	0.35-0.62

Figure 6: Trench table

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A186.2013), consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with the Leicestershire Museums Service.

The archive consists of:

- 5 trench recording sheets
- Photographic record indices
- Monochrome photo negatives & contact prints
- 6 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 of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of Loughborough University. The project was managed by Patrick Clay.

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Oasis Information

Project Name	Science and Enterprise Park, Ashby Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Roger Kipling
Previous/Future work	Development
Current Land Use	Agricultural
Development Type	Business development
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Post-determination
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK 583 183
Start/end dates of field work	November 2013
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Study Area	2.5 ha.

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