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Leicester

Archaeological Services

An archaeological field
evaluation on land west of
Repton Road,
Willington, Derbyshire
(SK 2928 2825)

James Patrick




ULAS Report No 2014-238

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(SK 2928 2825)**

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Summary

An archaeological field evaluation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land West of Repton Road, Willington, Derbyshire (NGR: SK 2928 2825).

The work was undertaken on former pastoral land. The study area is split in two areas by a former quarry road (Kingfisher Lane). There has been substantial quarrying in and around the development area, so the initial objective was to excavate 12 test pits north of the road and one test pit south of the road on areas of possible un-quarried ground. However the site was already undergoing development, therefore badly disturbed before the test pitting could be undertaken. Following a meeting and site inspection, ground evidence showed quarrying had taken place on the bulk of the study area. However there was a possibility that fields South of Kingfisher Lane could be untouched by quarrying.

This area of Derbyshire, is very rich in prehistoric to early medieval archaeology. Such archaeological evidence from these periods was gathered from Willington Quarry directly to the west of the study area. Therefore there was a strong possibility of further archaeological deposits to be present within the development area.

The evaluation consisted of three trenches placed at the eastern half of the field south of Kingfisher Lane. All three trenches proved negative for archaeological features.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by Persimmon Homes Ltd to carry out an archaeological field evaluation on land west of Repton Road, Willington, Derbyshire (NGR: SK 2928 2825). This archaeological work is in accordance with NPPF Section 12: Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment.

An archaeological desk-based assessment has been undertaken (Hunt 2013). The Derbyshire Historic Environment Record (HER) indicated that the area around the southern part of Derby is rich in prehistoric archaeology, with several ceremonial landscapes and Iron Age settlements in vicinity of the assessment area. There are also several Roman sites including a Roman road and enclosures. However there had been previous quarrying in the area which appeared to included most of the northern half of the development.

The Derbyshire County Council Development Control Archaeologist had requested a strip, map and sample excavation commencing with a series of trial trenches to establish the extent of the earlier quarrying. However as the development had already commenced including all the areas of potential impact this was modified to include a trial trench evaluation of an area south of Kingfisher Lane which although not scheduled for development would perhaps provide an indication of whether archaeological deposits had been present within the areas already developed.

The site is divided into two areas dissected by Kingfisher Lane running east – west. Following a site visit and examination of exposed substrata it appeared highly likely that all the northern area currently being developed was within an area which had been previously quarried. However south of Kingfisher Lane a balancing pond had been excavated through undisturbed gravels within an area which is generally flat and roughly ‘L’ shaped.



Figure 1: Site Location

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Location and Geology

Repton Road (B5008) forms the western side of Willington village with the study area approximately 100 metres to the west. The trenching area lies directly south of Kingfisher Lane (former quarry road). The overall site consists of an approximate north-west to south-east sub-rectangular area separated by the east to west orientated Kingfisher Lane. Overall the area covers around 2.3 hectares. More than three quarters of the area (north of Kingfisher Lane) has been disturbed by former quarrying. Therefore the study area was limited to around 0.5 hectares south of Kingfisher Lane where the ground may have been undisturbed.

The British Geological Survey website while showing the assessment area to be of made up ground due to quarrying, other areas are not likely to have been quarried. Therefore the geology in undisturbed areas consists of alluvial overlying sand and gravel with mudstone beneath.

Historical and Archaeological Background (from Hunt 2013)

The assessment area is located within an area rich in prehistoric archaeological remains and there are also Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains in the general vicinity of the site. There are also several sites, which have been identified by aerial photography in the vicinity of the assessment area, but have not been closely dated.

The vast majority of this archaeological information has been gathered during quarrying carried out along the course of the River Trent over the last 30 years, particularly from Willington Quarry itself, which lies to the direct west of the assessment area. The archaeological investigations here are still on-going.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Derbyshire indicates that there are no known archaeological remains within the assessment area itself.

Prehistoric

A large number of Acheulean hand axes and flakes dated from the lower Palaeolithic have been found at Willington North gravel pits, around 1km north-west of the assessment area (HER Ref No. **MDR2575**). A further handaxe and core were found nearby (**MDR2588**).

Circa 300m to the south of the assessment area are features interpreted as enclosures and a drove way, most likely late prehistoric in date (**MDR7694**).

Less than 500m to the west of the assessment area are a number of cropmarks possibly associated with the presence of a Bronze Age barrow and later field boundaries (**MDR7692**). Further to the west are another group of cropmarks, possibly associated with further

enclosures, but these have not been closely dated (**MDR7693**). There is another group nearby (**MDR7696**). A late Neolithic settlement, including the footprints for four houses were discovered during excavations at Willington in 1970-72 (**MDR7051**), 700m south-west of the assessment area. Nearby work also uncovered evidence for Bronze Age ring ditches and a barrow (**MDR7058**). Close by is further evidence of occupation from the Neolithic, continuing through later periods and into the early Anglo-Saxon period (Dark Age). Features include pits, post-holes, barrows (not closely dated), clay lined pits of an Iron Age date, plus material from the Roman period including many pits, a corn dryer and a hearth dug through one of the earlier barrows (**MDR2586**).

A series of burnt mounds, post-holes and stake-hole features and a ring ditch were discovered during the excavation of a haul road and Willington Quarry by ULAS in 1996-2001. These were dated to the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods (**MDR7147**; Beamish 2009).

A group of Mesolithic and Neolithic artefacts have been discovered during archaeological monitoring on a site nearby (**MDR12344**).

Cropmarks interpreted as ring ditches and enclosures have been identified on land at Etwall Road, 600m north of the assessment area (**MDR7691**), further enclosures, pit alignments and other features have been identified on areas 1km to the north-east of the assessment area (**MDR2584 & MDR12143**).

A ring ditch, with three phases of construction, plus evidence of later Iron Age and Roman activity lies nearby (**MDR7091**).

Evidence for an Iron Age settlement, including enclosures and other features has been found around 730m south-west of the site (**MDR7088**).

There are more enclosures and pit alignments, alongside a barrow and other features, dating from the late prehistoric period around 900m to the east of the assessment area (**MDR7698 & MDR8089**).

Roman

Evidence for Romano-British settlement is known throughout the area covered by Willington Quarry, with areas of high prehistoric activity showing continuity into the Roman period and beyond (see **MDR2586** above).

A Roman-British farmstead has been identified 800m south-west of the assessment area (**MDR7089**).

A possible Roman camp lies at 'The Buries', 770m south east of the assessment area, although it may be medieval in date (**MDR2572**).

Anglo-Saxon

Archaeological remains associated with Anglo-Saxon sunken buildings (grübenhauser), along with enclosures and other field systems, have been identified within Willington Quarry, 800m south-west of the assessment area (**MDR7090**).

Medieval

A large area of ridge and furrow earthworks can be found on land 760m south-east of the assessment area (**MDR8084**). There are other field systems to the north (**MDR8085**) and to the north-east (**MDR8088**).

The Grade II listed church of St. Michael lies 300m east of the assessment area (**MDR2573**).

Post-medieval

There are a number of post-medieval buildings in the vicinity of the assessment area.

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.



Figure 2: Trench Location Plan

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 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) *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 I).

A 5% sample was proposed for trenching in an area east of the balancing pond, the equivalent of three 20m x 1.6m trenches. The machine bucket use was 1.9m wide giving a slightly larger sample than was intended.

Trench 1 varied slightly from its intended place in order to avoid Great Crested Newt habitat perimeter barriers. Trenches 2 and 3 were in their intended position. The trenches were excavated by a small tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. After recording the trenches were backfilled.



Plate 1: Work in progress on trench 3

Results

Trench 01

Orientation: North-west to south-east

Length: 20m

Width: 1.9m

Topsoil: Mid-yellowish brown loam with frequent rounded pebbles

Subsoil: Very light yellow brown sandy silt with very sparse pebbles

Natural Substratum: Light orange brown. Loose sand and gravel with silty sand patches

Interval	S 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m
Topsoil Depth	0.20m	0.18m	0.26m	0.45m	Disturbed
Subsoil Depth	0.60m	0.60m	0.40m	0.40m	Disturbed
Top of natural	0.80m	0.80m	0.80m	0.85m	N/A
Base of Trench	0.80m	0.88m	0.95m	0.85m	N/A

At the eastern end of the trench, modern disturbance extended for approximately 3 metres south-east. The average top-soil depth was approximately 0.26m. This contained small fragments of clinker and very frequent pebbles. This overlay a very deep subsoil which averaged 0.50m deep. This was very compact, clean and of very sharp clarity to the top-soil. No features were identified within this trench. This trench was similar in make- up and depths to trenches 2 and 3.



Plate 2: Trench 01, post-excavation, looking north-west

Trench 02

Orientation: North-east to south-west

Length: 20m

Width: 1.9m

Topsoil: Dark yellow brown loam with frequent gravel/pebbles

Subsoil: Mid orange/ yellow brown sandy silt. Very sparse components

Natural Substratum: Light reddish brown loose silty sand/ gravel

Interval	nw 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m
Topsoil Depth	0.25m	0.25m	0.25m	0.30m	0.30m
Subsoil Depth	0.45m	0.65m	0.60m	0.50m	0.60m
Top of natural	0.65m	0.90m	0.85m	0.80m	0.90m
Base of Trench	0.75m	0.90m	1.0m	1.05m	1.0m

No archaeological features were identified within this trench.



Plate 3: Trench 02, post-excavation, looking south-west

Trench 03

Orientation: East-west

Length: 20m

Width: 1.9m

Topsoil: Dark yellow brown loam with frequent gravel/ pebbles

Subsoil: Light yellow/orange brown sandy silt

Natural Substratum: Light reddish brown sand and gravel

Interval	SW 2m	5m	10m	15m	20m
Topsoil Depth	0.20m	0.25m	0.20m	0.30m	0.40m
Subsoil Depth	0.60m	0.80m	1.0m	0.90m	0.80m
Top of natural	0.80m	1.05m	1.20m	1.20m	1.20m
Base of Trench	1.20m	1.15m	1.20m	1.20m	1.20m

No archaeological features were identified within this trench.



Plate 4: Trench 3, post excavation, looking north-east



Plate 5: Trench 3, north-west facing section

Conclusion

The area around Willington is very rich in archaeological sites, therefore the site off Repton Road/ Kingfisher Lane had some potential for archaeological features. Directly to the west of the site, Willington Quarry has revealed considerable evidence of prehistoric archaeology so there was potential for further archaeological deposits to be present particularly from prehistoric periods. Residential development had already started north of Kingfisher Lane and a balancing pond had been excavated to the south. Inspection of ground works during housing development appeared to indicate that quarrying had previously taken place over the entire area north of Kingfisher Lane. Inspection of the land to the south of Kingfisher Lane at the west side of the field revealed a recently excavated large settlement pond through an undisturbed natural gravel substratum. To attempt to establish whether any archaeological deposits had been damaged a possible un-quarried area immediately to the east of the settlement pond was evaluated with three 20 metre trial trenches.

Trench 01 had up to five metres of disturbance from the north-west. Further to the south-east of the trench, the top soil was rich in small well sorted pebbles and gravel with some modern brick fragments. The sub-soil was consistently thick and clean averaging a depth of 0.80m. Trench 02 /03 was similar with the same consistent gravelly top soil and thick sub-soil.

No archaeological features were visible in any of the three trenches. While it cannot be certain whether the area of the balancing pond would have provided similar results there was no evidence of any archaeological deposits.

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Persimmon Homes for supplying a mechanical excavator and drivers to enable prompt undertaking of the evaluation.

Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Derby Museum with accession number DBYMU.

The archive consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (2014-238)
- 3 Trench recording sheets
- 1 Contact sheet of digital photographs

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