UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
Archaeological Services

An Archaeological field evaluation at Hill Farm, Packington, Leicestershire (SK 3731 1445)

Wayne Jarvis

ULAS Report No 2015-172

An Archaeological field evaluation at Hill Farm, Packington, Leicestershire (SK 3731 1445)

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for

AECOM Ltd.

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An Archaeological Field Evaluation at

Hill Farm, Packington, Leicestershire (SK 3731 14454)

Wayne Jarvis

Summary

An archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land at Hill Farm, Packington, Leicestershire (SK 3731 14454), during November 2015. The work was in advance of a proposed solar farm. Seven trenches were excavated targeting geophysical anomalies and with a general spread across the remainder of the site, excluding the southern portion which has been subject to open-cast coal mining in the past. The trial trenching proved negative, with only agriculturally related features being identified, consisting of plough furrows and land drains. No evidence for early mining activity was identified either. A metal detector survey of the arisings was also carried out. This produced only modern ferrous items.

The archive for this work will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number XA126.2015.

1 Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by AECOM Ltd. On behalf of Northern Solar to carry out an archaeological field evaluation on land at Hill Farm, Packington, Leicestershire (SK 3731 1445). The site lies east of the village of Packington in north-west Leicestershire. The proposed site is for a new solar farm.

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

2 Site Location, Details, Geology and Topography

The proposed development area is located in the parish of Packington, and east of the historic village core. (SK 3731 1445 centre). The area reported on here is a single rectangular pasture field. Spring Lane forms the southern boundary of the site, with the north and west bounded by agricultural land and a tributary of the Gilwiskaw Brook to the east. The field currently has a short grass crop, but has been ploughed in the recent past. The underlying geology of the proposed site comprises Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation. No superficial deposits are recorded within the proposed site. Topographically, there is a moderate slope down to the south towards Spring Lane, with the height falling from 126m to 121 m AOD.

Figure 1: Location Map. Site area highlighted.

1:50 000 (Landranger) ©Crown Copyright. Licence No. 100021186.

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland shows that there are a few known archaeological sites within the vicinity of the assessment area. The following summarises known sites in the vicinity of the proposed development.

There are no known early prehistoric sites within the vicinity of the site area.

Fieldwalking in 1990 and 1996 recovered worked flint at Normanton le Heath to the south-east of site, potentially of Neolithic date.

One kilometre to the north-west of site, faint circular marks were identified from aerial photography and interpreted as possible Bronze Age barrows. At Alton Grange to the north-east, a similar circular feature was identified and Prehistoric pottery was also recovered during Fieldwalking nearby.

There are no Iron Age or Roman sites known within the vicinity of the site. The nearest evidence of this date is from 2km away east of Heather Road. Here a Romano-British settlement site was excavated, and enclosures, a possible timber building, and a pottery kiln were identified.

The actual settlement core of Packington village is of historic medieval and post-medieval date (HER ref. MLE 10599), with the 13th century Church of the Holy Rood surviving (MLE10868). A cropmark enclosure and ridge and furrow are also recorded on the HER database in the site environs. Post-medieval activity is attested in the village core.

Modern activity is known with coal mining activity in the area. The south of the current site is thought to have been mined, in the interwar years. The subject site has been part of the Spring Lane opencast coal site worked in between 1950 and restored by 1953. The outcrop of the Yard seam was within the south one third of the field and the coal was worked from the surface down to a depth of 3.5 metres (Coal Mining Risk Assessment Report 2015).

A geophysical survey has previously been prepared (Davies 2015). A detailed gradiometry survey was undertaken over approximately 3 hectares. Evidence of ridge and furrow was identified, considered to be the only convincing anomaly of probable archaeological origin. The remaining features were interpreted as natural or modern in origin and included areas of natural variation, land drains, an area of scattered magnetic debris, magnetic disturbance from nearby ferrous objects and magnetic spikes that are likely to be modern rubbish.

4 Archaeological Objectives

The main project objectives were:

- To determine the level of risk that the archaeological resource would present (if found) to the construction programme and aid in determination of any additional mitigation work specification and programme if required.
- If significant results are obtained it is likely that further stages of archaeological work will be required. This could entail preservation in situ, excavation and recording prior to construction, watching brief, areas of no further work and assessment, analysis, reporting, publication and archiving of the results.

5 Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014). The archaeological work

followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Trial Trenching* (WSI) prepared by AECOM (Finch 2015).

The trenches were to be set as shown in the WSI (Figure 2), avoiding the previously mined area in the south. The trench plan was agreed with the Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Principal Planning Archaeologist. The size and position indicated on the provisional trench plan would only be varied if agreed, due to unforeseen site constraints or the presence of archaeological deposits. The table below outlines the trench requirements.

Table 1:Trench Requirements

TR	Dim.	Description
1	30 x 2m	Investigate a potential linear anomaly identified by the geophysical survey
2	"	Investigate a potential linear anomaly identified by the geophysical survey
3	"	Investigate an anomaly identified by the geophysical survey
4	"	Investigate an area identified as blank by the geophysical survey
5	"	Investigate an anomaly identified by the geophysical survey
6	"	Investigate an area identified as blank by the geophysical survey
7	"	Investigate an anomaly identified by the geophysical survey

Total area: 420m2

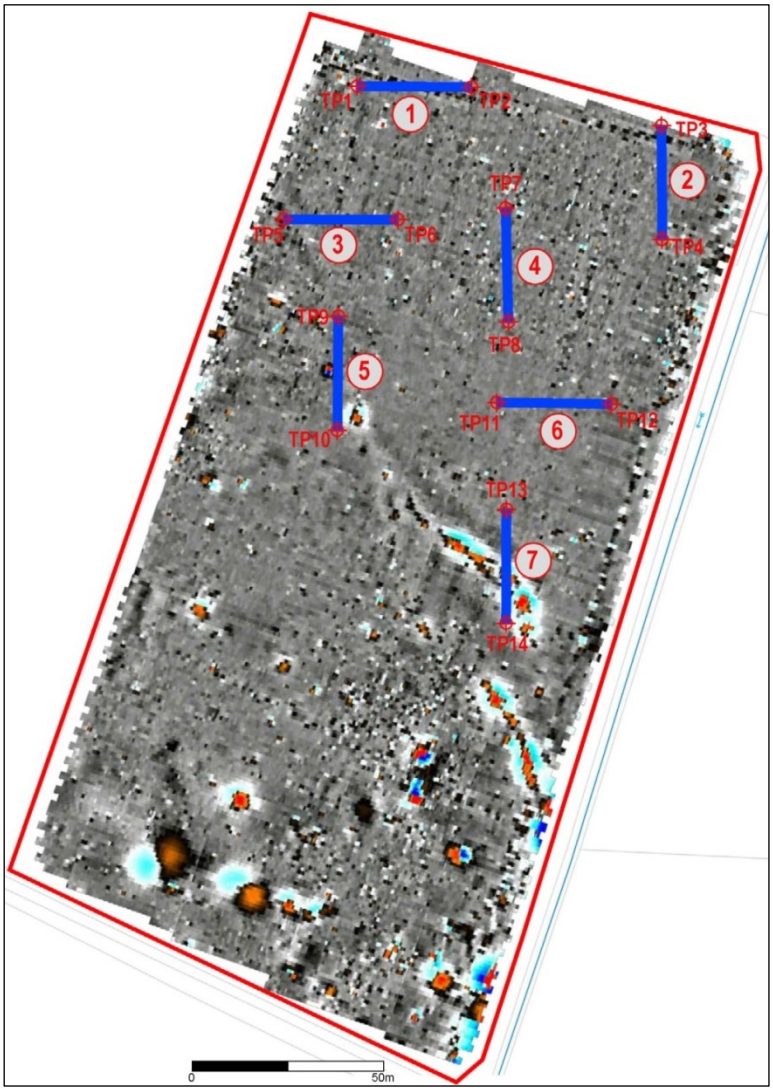

Figure 2: Trench plan, overlain on geophysical results. After Finch 2015.

6 Results

Fieldwork was carried out between 16th and 17th November 2015. The trenches were located as proposed in the WSI (Figure 3). These were set out using calibrated GPS and tapes to confirm their lengths. All trenches were excavated by a 360 degree excavator with a ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. After excavation and recording the trenches were backfilled, with subsoil and topsoil being reinstated correctly. The table below shows the trench results.

T No.	Coordinates	Orientation	Topsoil depth (min m.)	Topsoil depth (max m.)	Depth to natural (min m.)	Depth to natural (max m.)	Notes
1	437309/314574 to 437339/314573	E-W	0.28	0.30	0.29	0.34	Furrows, land drains (incl. geophys anomaly)
2	437389/314563 to 437390/314533	N-S	0.28	0.33	0.32	0.38	Furrow, land drains (incl. geophys anomaly)
3	437290/314538 to 437320/314538	E- W	0.26	0.32	0.28	0.46	Geophys anomaly. Deep furrow, land drains
4	437348/314541 to 437349/314511	N-S	0.26	0.30	0.27	0.36	Furrow, land drain
5	437304/314513 to 437304/314483	N-S	0.27	0.30	0.31	0.45	Geophys anomaly. Furrow, land drains
6	437346/314490 to 437376/314490	E-W	0.26	0.33	0.30	0.39	Furrows, land drains
7	437349/314462 to 437348/314432	N-S	0.30	0.34	0.36	0.47	Geophys anomaly. Furrow, land drain

The sequence of overburden varied little between the trenches. Topsoil consisted of a dark brownish-grey silty clay with very infrequent fine gravel. Subsoil where present was an orange-brown clay also with only infrequent fine gravel. Where identified, the subsoil invariably proved to be within infilled plough furrows.

Natural in Trenches 1 to 5 was a reddish-orange clay, with occasional blue and yellowish-orange clay bands (Figure 5). Trench 6 exposed a natural outcrop of ironstone (Figure 6). Trench 7 exposed a natural consisting of manganese-rich gravel with ironstone and rounded pebbles.

Trenches 1 and 2 exposed an east-west length of modern land drain, backfilled with a mix of topsoil and subsoil. It was this feature that was indicated on the geophysical survey crossing the north end of the proposed site (Figure 4). These and the other trenches also exposed further land drains running north-south. These were regularly spaced and tended to be within and parallel to infilled plough furrows. The plough furrows could potentially be from medieval ridge and furrow. The other anomalies identified in the geophysical survey proved to be of natural origin, with the variation in natural across the site probably explaining the anomalies in the south area of the trial trenching scheme. The south area of the proposed site outside the trial trenching regime has reportedly been mined for coal; however no evidence for mining activity was identified in the north half of site.

A Garrett GTI 1500 metal detector was used on the arisings from trenching. This produced only modern ferrous items. These pieces were discarded after identification.

Figure 3: General view of evaluated site from Trench 7.

Figure 4: Trench 2. Modern drain (geophysical anomaly).

Figure 5: Trench 5. Clay natural exposed.

Figure 6: Trench 6. Clayey ironstone natural exposed.

8 Conclusion

The trial trenching on site proved negative of archaeological features and finds. No evidence for early mining activity was identified. The results confirmed that the geophysical anomalies that had been identified in the gradiometry survey were of agricultural or natural origin. No artefacts were recovered either during the metal detector survey or the trial trenching works.

9 Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Nick Finch of AECOM Ltd and Charles Pickering of Northern Solar for their help and co-operation with this project. The project was monitored on behalf of the Planning Authority by Richard Clark. The project was managed by Richard Buckley and the fieldwork was carried out by the author. I am also grateful to Nicholas Cooper also of ULAS, for confirmation of the modern origin of the metal finds.

10 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	Hill Farm, Packington
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	R. Buckley
Project Supervisor	W Jarvis
Previous/Future work	Geophys, Evaluation
Current Land Use	Pasture
Development Type	Solar farm
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Requirement
Site Co ordinates	SK 3731 1445
Start/end dates of field work	16-17/11/2015
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums
Study Area	3.1ha

11 Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number XA126.2015.

The archive for this work consists of the following:

- Trench Index (1 A4 page) and 7 Trench record sheets
- 1 Photo Record sheet.
- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report 2015-153)
- Digital photography contact sheet
- Digital photographs on CD

12 Bibliography

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