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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation at Hilltop Farm Nottingham Road, Melton
Mowbray, Leicestershire**

NGR SK 74111 21026

Adam Clapton



ULAS Report No 2016-038

Accession Number X.A6.2016

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Melton Mowbray
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NGR: SK 74111 21026

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For: Mr Martin Brown and HSSP Architects

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Contents

Summary	1
Introduction	1
Site Description, Topography and Geology	2
Archaeological and Historical background	3
Archaeological Objectives	3
Methodology	4
Results	7
<i>Trench 1</i>	7
<i>Trench 2</i>	13
<i>Trench 3</i>	15
<i>Trench 4</i>	18
<i>Trench 5</i>	21
<i>Trench 6</i>	22
<i>Trench 7</i>	25
Iron Age Pottery and Fired Clay <i>Nicholas J. Cooper</i>	26
The Flint <i>Lynden Cooper</i>	27
The Animal Bones <i>Jennifer Browning</i>	27
The Charred Plant Remains <i>Rachel Small</i>	29
Conclusion	30
Archive and Publications	31
Bibliography	32
Acknowledgements	33

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Site location (from WSI)	2
Figure 2: Geophysical Survey with proposed development area in blue	3
Figure 3: Trench locations with geophysical survey.....	5
Figure 4: Trench plan with archaeological features (shown in black) and blank trenches (shown in red)	6
Figure 5: Trench 1 viewed from the north-west.....	8
Figure 6: Plans and sections within trench 1.....	9
Figure 7: Ditch [11] in Trench 1 looking south	11
Figure 8: Ditch [13] in Trench 1 looking south	11
Figure 9: Section across Ditch [15] in Trench 1 looking south	12
Figure 10: Gully [21] in Trench 1	12
Figure 11: Trench 2 looking east	13
Figure 12: Plan and sections of ditch [26]	14
Figure 13: Ditch [26] in Trench 2 looking north.....	15
Figure 14: Trench 3 looking north-east.....	15
Figure 15: Plan and sections within Trench 3	16
Figure 16: Pit [3] in Trench 3 looking south-east	17
Figure 17: Ditch [6] in Trench 3 looking south-east.....	18
Figure 18: Trench 4 looking east	18
Figure 23: Trench 5 looking south-east	22
Figure 24: Trench 6 looking east	23
Figure 25: Plan and section of Ditch [17].....	24
Figure 26: Ditch [17] in Trench 6 looking south	25
Figure 27: Trench 7 looking south-east	26

An Archaeological Evaluation at Hilltop Farm
Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire
NGR SK 74111 21026

Adam Clapton

Summary

An archaeological field evaluation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land off Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, SK 74111 21026

The work was commissioned by Mr Martin Brown and HSSP Architects advance of the development of the site for new housing. Geophysical survey has been undertaken (Richardson 2015) which has located anomalies most likely relating to Iron Age or Romano-British settlement. They do not appear to be associated with the Scheduled Monument (SM) of Sysonby Grange to the west being on different alignments and of different form.

Seven trenches were excavated across the area of proposed development with positive results in five of the seven trenches. With the exception of a single pit, all features appeared to represent linear features (ditches and gullies). Diagnostic sherds of pottery indicate a mid-late Iron Age date for these features. The archive for this site will be deposited with Leicestershire County Museums with accession number X.A6.2016

Introduction

Outline planning permission has been granted by Melton Borough Council for new residential development on land at Hilltop Farm, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire NGR SK 74111 21026

This report represents the programme of archaeological trial trenching that was undertaken between the 18th January and the 21st January 2016. It follows an archaeological desk-based assessment (Hyam 2015) and geophysical survey (Richardson 2015) and adhered to a strategy of work set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (hereinafter WSI; ULAS 2015)

The work involved the machine excavation of seven trial trenches in order to provide a c.2% of the area where it was proposed to construct new residential dwellings. The number, size, orientation and distribution of the trenches equated to an area of c.256² of excavation and were positioned to target anomalies highlighted on the geophysical survey (Richardson 2015) across the proposed development area.

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 was in accordance with the Chartered Institute for

Archaeologists (CIFA) Code of Conduct (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014).

Site Description, Topography and Geology

Melton Mowbray lies in the eastern half of Leicestershire approximately 20km to the north-east of Leicester. The land belonging to Hilltop Farm lies on the northern edge of Melton Mowbray on the western side of the A606 Nottingham Road at its junction with St. Bartholomew's Road which runs westwards towards the Holwell Works. The proposed development site covers *c.* 1.15 ha and is in the field to the south-east of the complex of buildings that form Hilltop Farm. A system of earthworks belonging to the Scheduled Monument (SM) of Sysonby Grange lies in the adjacent field to the west of the proposed development site.

The land is relatively flat with a gentle slope down towards the south and west and has an average height of between 115 and 125m aOD. It is currently in use as pasture land for horses belonging to Hill Top Farm.

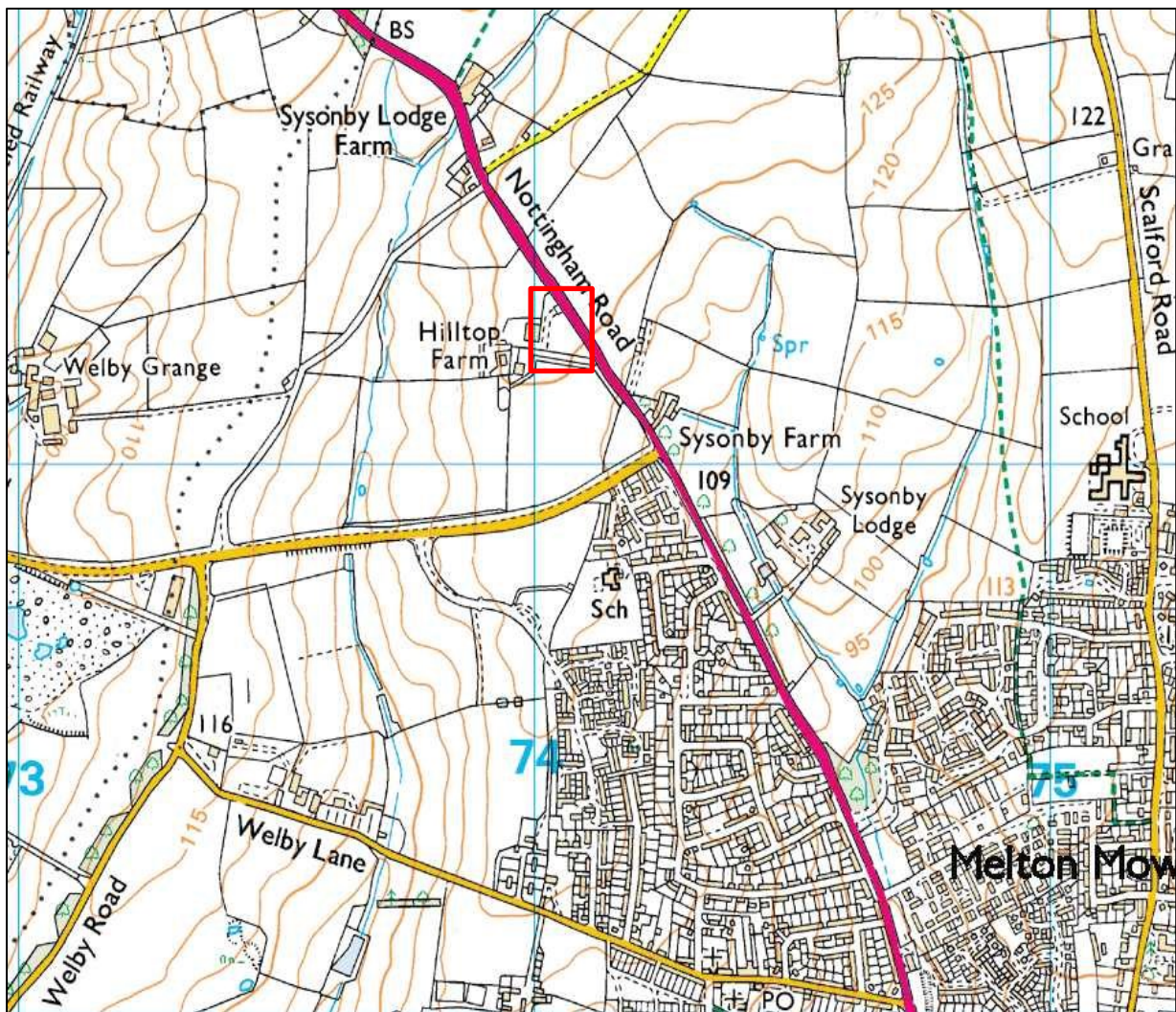


Figure 1: Site location (from WSI)

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the bedrock is likely to be Charmouth Mudstone Formation overlain by Oadby Member Diamicton.

Archaeological and Historical background

An archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared (Hyam 2015). There are a small number of heritage assets within a 1km radius of the site recorded on the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) including the earthworks for the Sysonby Grange Scheduled Monument (SM). No earthworks are visible within the site boundaries. Geophysical survey has been undertaken (Richardson 2015) which has located anomalies most likely relating to iron Age or Romano-British settlement (Fig.2). They do not appear to be associated with the SM being on different alignments and of different form.

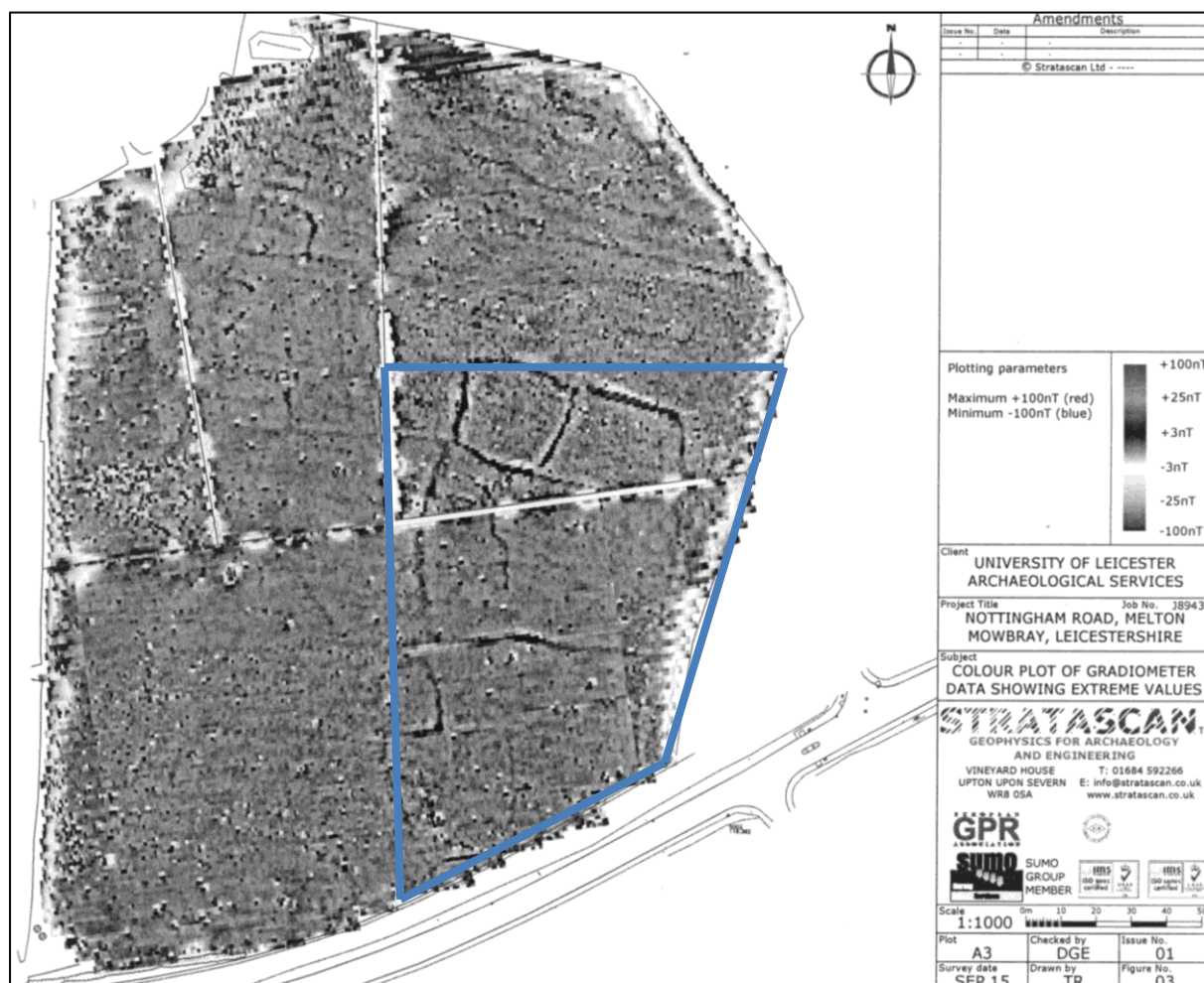


Figure 2: Geophysical Survey with proposed development area in blue

Archaeological Objectives

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.

The results of the evaluation will 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.

All work 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* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014);
- *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014);
- *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Association of Local Government Officers, 2003);

Methodology

Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological advisors to the planning authority requested an archaeological field evaluation to identify and record any archaeological remains of significance and as a consequence a programme of evaluation trenching was undertaken.

Seven trenches were proposed, providing a 2% sample of the area. The seven trenches were excavated at 1.6m in width and 20m in length using the trench layout shown in fig 3, with trenches 3 and 6 being lengthened to define possible features as marked on the geophysical survey.

Topsoil and subsoil was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (c.1.6m 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. The trenches were recorded at an appropriate scale by measured drawing and photography and were GPS-located to Ordnance Survey National Grid.

A photographic record, utilising 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.

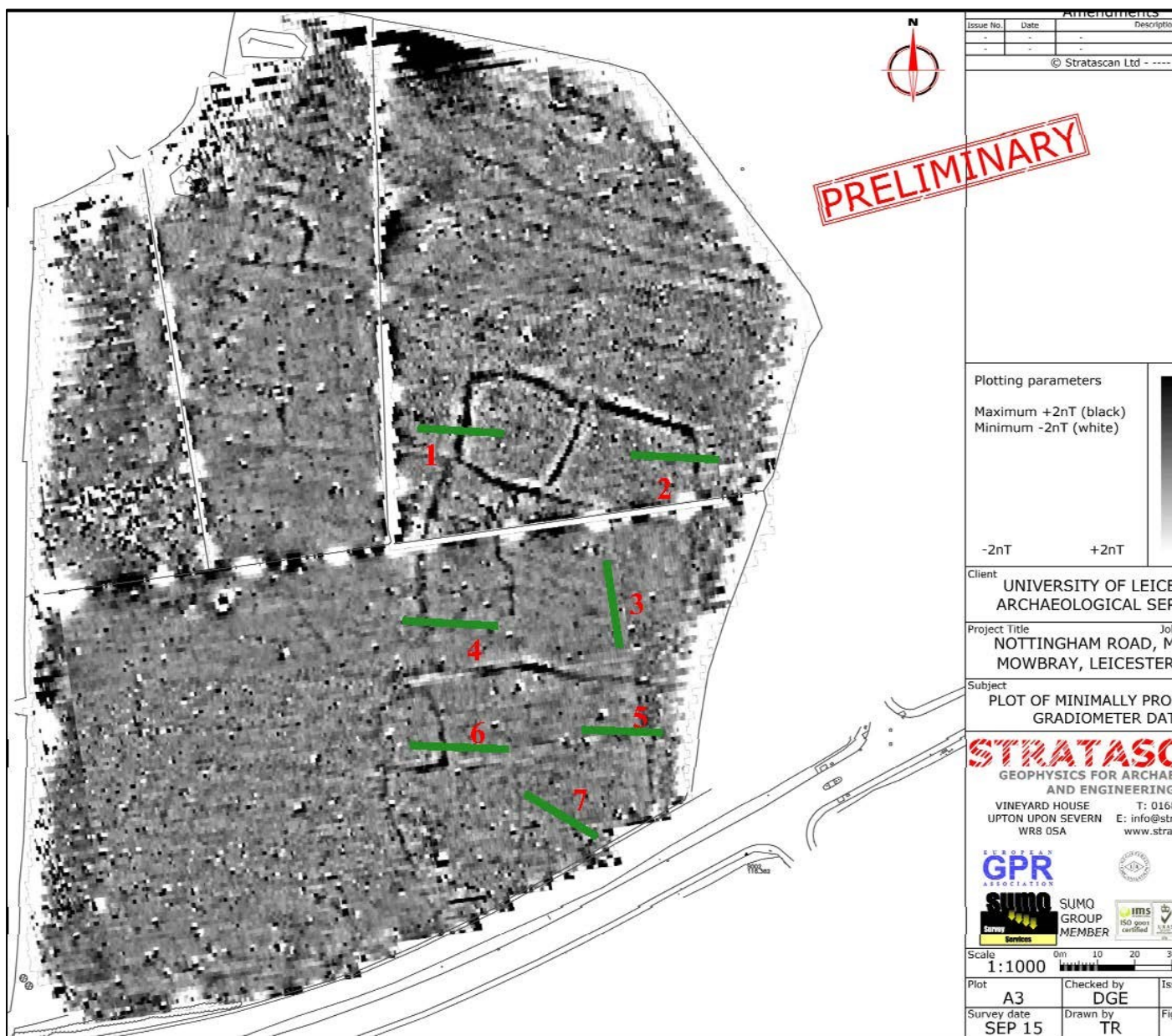


Figure 3: Trench locations with geophysical survey

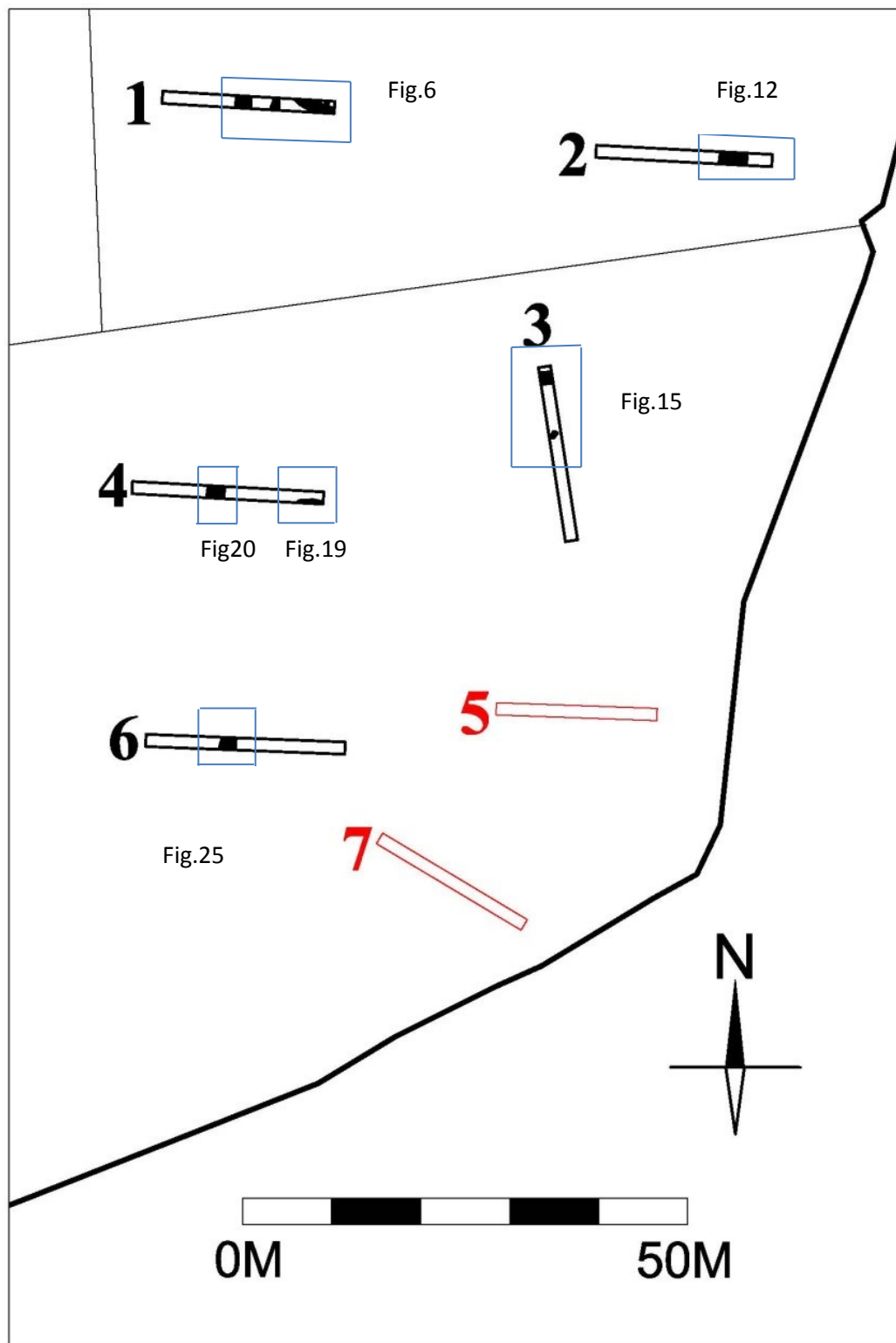


Figure 4: Trench plan with archaeological features (shown in black) and blank trenches (shown in red)

Results

Seven trenches were excavated across the area of proposed development. Unless otherwise stated, the topsoil consisted of friable, dark greyish brown silty-clay loam with 5% pebbles (1), below which mid-yellowish brown silty-clay plastic subsoil with 5% pebbles (2) was present. The natural subsoil consisted of yellowish brown clay with occasional sand patches with chalk flecks throughout.

All measurements were taken from the top of the trench.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the north-west of the development area over an anomaly of a probable ditch highlighted on the geophysical survey which appeared to run north east- south west (Fig. 5).

Length-22.5m

Width-1.6m

Interval	W 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	22.5m E
Topsoil Depth	0.15m	0.18m	0.14m	0.15m	0.16m	0.16m
Subsoil Depth	0.15m	0.17m	0.13m	0.16m	0.15m	0.14m
Top of natural substratum	0.30m	0.35m	0.27m	0.31m	0.31m	0.30m
Base of trench	0.36m	0.41m	0.32m	0.34m	0.36m	0.35m

Along with two south-east to north-west aligned ceramic field drains, four separate archaeological features were observed in the base of trench 1 (Figs 6 and 7).



Figure 5: Trench 1 viewed from the north-west

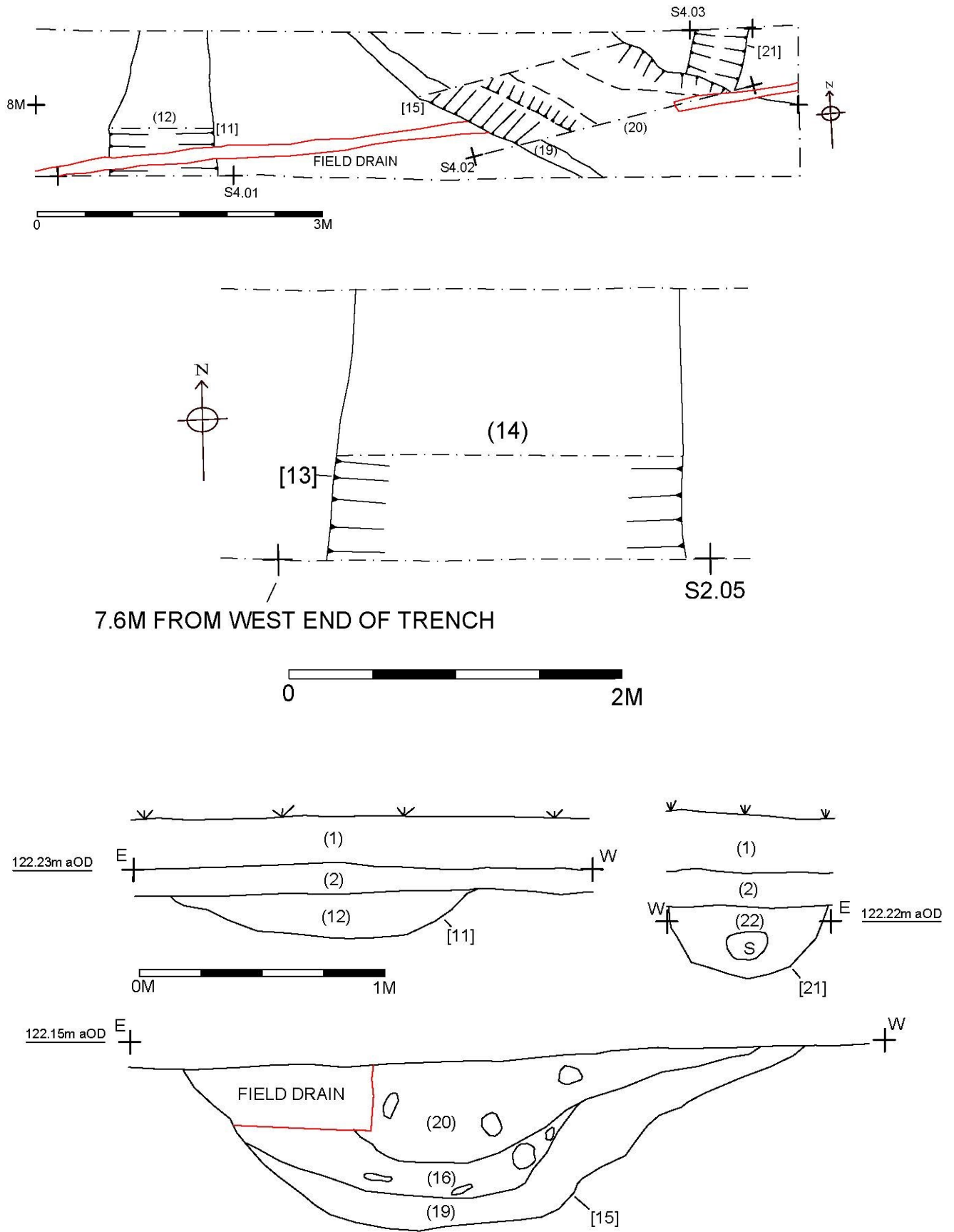


Figure 6: Plans and sections within trench 1

A relatively wide but shallow linear feature, probably a ditch [11] measuring 2m in width and 0.20m in depth was recorded at 8.1m from the west end of trench 1 (fig 7). It contained a single fill (12) comprising of firm mid-yellowish-brown silty-clay, with occasional sub rounded-rounded stone inclusions. Two sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from this fill. This feature although shallow, appeared to confirm the linear anomaly highlighted on the geophysical survey.

At 6.18m from the east end of the trench another shallow linear feature, probably a ditch [13] was present running north-south across the trench. It measured 1.2m in width and 0.25m in depth, with shallow sides and a flat base (fig 8). The feature had been truncated by a ceramic field drain running east-west. It contained a single fill (14) comprising firm mid yellowish brown silty-clay, with occasional sub rounded stone inclusions. Animal bone was recovered from this fill, identified as large mammal and goat/sheep fragments.

At the east end a further two features were located. A relatively wide linear feature, again probably a ditch [15] was aligned south-east to north-west (fig 9). It measured 1.6m in width and 0.7m in depth, and possibly shows a slight curve, although this cannot be definitely attributed in a narrow evaluation trench. This feature was also cut by the same ceramic field drain which cut [13]. It contained three fills. The lower fill (19) comprised of a mid-yellowish-brown silty-clay, with occasional small stone pebbles and charcoal fleck inclusions. The fill contained a single sherd of Iron Age pottery and vertebrae from a large mammal. This was overlain by dark greyish brown silty-clay with occasional small angular-rounded pebble inclusions and charcoal and chalk flecks (16). A significant quantity of pottery, 24 sherds, was recovered from this fill with a particularly diagnostic scored ware sherd indicating a mid-late Iron Age date. Three animal bone fragments showing evidence of sheep/goat was also recovered from this fill. Environmental sampling of this fill also yielded some charred plant remains. The presence of a higher quantity of charcoal fragments could be attributed to a possible occupational backfill layer. A secondary flint flake was also recorded in this fill. The final recorded fill (20) comprised of a mid greyish brown silty-clay with occasional large angular-round stones and charcoal and chalk inclusions present. Seven Iron Age pottery sherds and a single fragment of fired clay were recovered from this fill. A good assemblage of animal bone was also recovered, showing evidence of cattle, sheep/goat, and red deer antler. A single secondary flint flake was also recovered from this fill.

Immediately to the north-east of ditch [15] a possible narrow shallow gully was revealed [21] running north-south into the north edge of Trench 1 (fig 10). It measured 0.6m in width and 0.26m in depth and appeared to be a smooth moderately sloping concave cut. It contained a single fill (22) comprising of mid yellowish grey silty-clay with occasional small-large sub rounded pebble inclusions. Two Iron Age pottery sherds diagnostic of the mid-late Iron Age, along with a single fragment of fired clay were recovered from this fill. Animal bone was also recovered from the fill and heat cracked pebbles were also noted. A relationship between ditch [15] and gully [21] could not be discerned as a ceramic field drain had truncated the intersection of the features.



Figure 7: Ditch [11] in Trench 1 looking south



Figure 8: Ditch [13] in Trench 1 looking south



Figure 9: Section across Ditch [15] in Trench 1 looking south

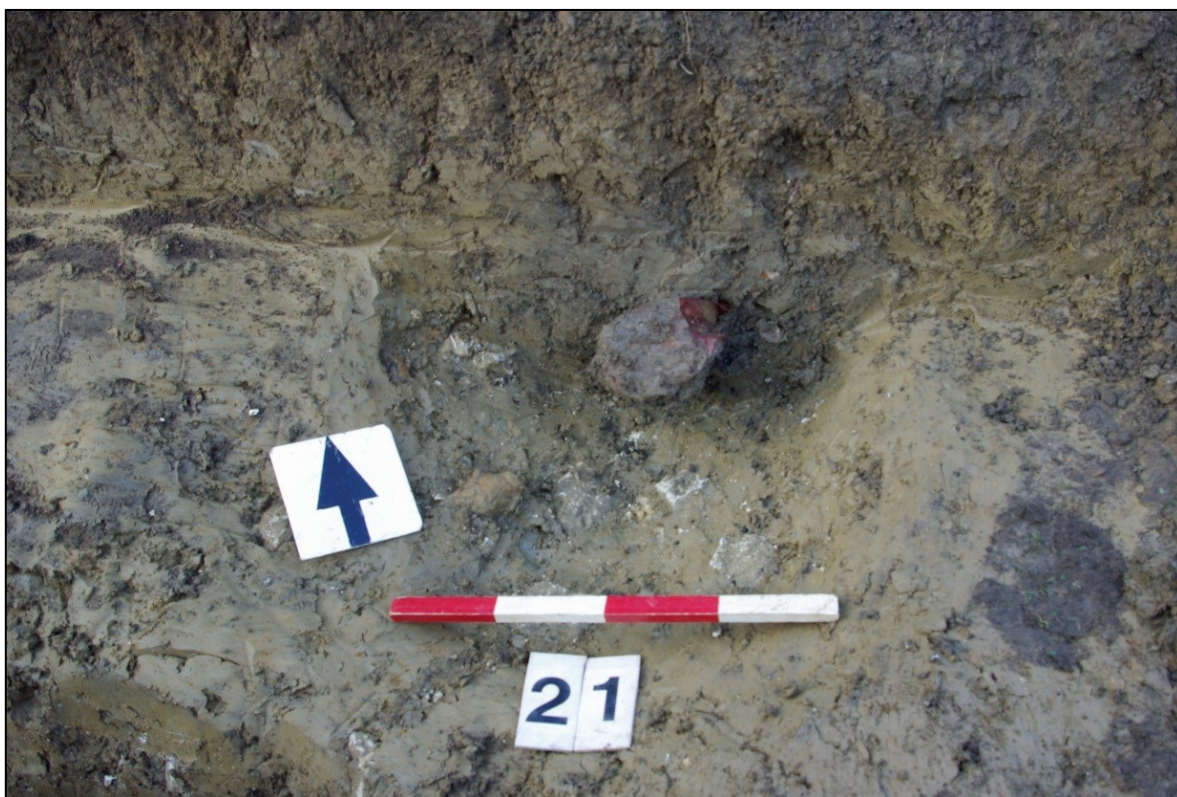


Figure 10: Gully [21] in Trench 1

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the north-east corner of the development area over a probable ditch highlighted on the geophysical survey which appeared to run north-south (fig 11). The trench sloped moderately from the west down to the east.



Figure 11: Trench 2 looking east

Length 23.5m

Width -1.6m

Interval	W 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	23.5m E
Topsoil Depth	0.17m	0.15m	0.15m	0.15m	0.17m	0.17m
Subsoil Depth	0.10m	0.12m	0.10m	0.12m	0.13m	0.12m
Top of natural substratum	0.27m	0.27m	0.25m	0.27m	0.30m	0.29m
Base of trench	0.32m	0.31m	0.33m	0.36m	0.38m	0.33m

Along with one south-east to north-west ceramic field drain, a single archaeological feature was observed at the east end of trench 2 (fig 12).

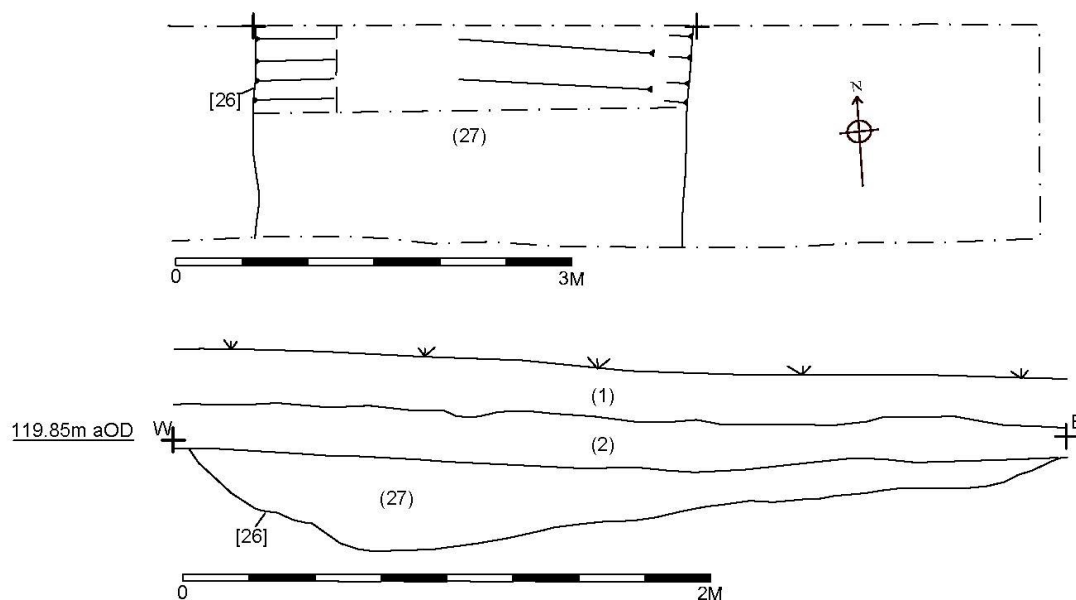


Figure 12: Plan and sections of ditch [26]

A wide shallow linear feature, probably a ditch [26] was observed running north-south across the width of the trench, at 2.7m from the east end (Fig. 13). This consisted of a shallow sloping cut, concave in shape with the eastern side being slightly shallower in depth, following the contours of the topography within the trench. It contained a single fill (27) comprising a plastic mid greyish brown silty-clay with occasional sub angular stone inclusions. No pottery was recovered from this fill, although several animal bones recovered showed evidence of horse and other mammals.

This feature appears to confirm the linear anomaly shown on the geophysical survey.



Figure 13: Ditch [26] in Trench 2 looking north

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located on the eastern side of the development area and appeared to be relatively clear of any strong geophysical anomalies (Fig. 14).



Figure 14: Trench 3 looking north-east

Length 23m (extended by 1m to north-north-east to define features)

Width 1.6m

Interval	NNE 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	23.5m SSW
Topsoil Depth	0.30m	0.27m	0.22m	0.23m	0.20m	0.25m
Subsoil Depth	0.11m	0.11m	0.11m	0.08m	0.11m	0.12m
Top of natural substratum	0.41m	0.38m	0.33m	0.31m	0.31m	0.37m
Base of trench	0.45m	0.40m	0.36m	0.37m	0.41m	0.41m

Along with a possible field drain running south-east to north-west, two archaeological features were observed in the northern half of Trench 3 (Fig 15).

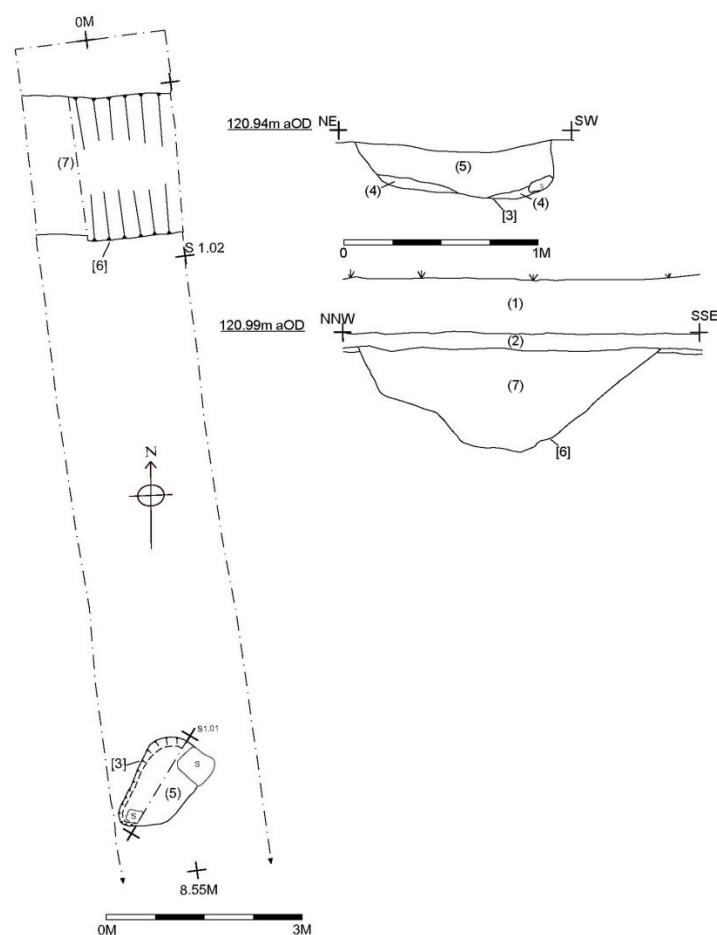


Figure 15: Plan and sections within Trench 3

A linear feature, probably a ditch [6] was located running approximately east-west across the trench at 0.6m from the north-north-east end (Fig. 16). This comprised a moderate-steep sided cut measuring 1.5m in width and 0.54m in depth. A single fill was recorded (7) consisting of mid dark yellowish-brown silty-clay with occasional small angular-rounded pebbles and some charcoal flecking. Pottery sherds and fragmented animal bone were recovered from the fill.

An isolated sub oval pit feature [3] was observed at 7.18m from the north-north-east end of the trench (fig 17). This measured 1m in length, 0.6m in width and up to 0.27m in depth. The cut had moderate to steep sloping sides with a relatively flat base. Two fills were recorded within the feature. The primary fill (4) comprised of mid yellowish brown silty-clays with occasional charcoal fleck inclusions. No finds were recovered from this fill. Overlaying this was a dark yellowish brown silty clay fill (5) containing occasional small-medium angular-rounded pebbles with some charcoal flecking. Two sherds of Iron Age pottery, a single fragment of fired clay, flint shatter and fragmentary animal bone was recovered from this fill.

Neither ditch [6] nor pits [3] were clearly visible on the geophysical survey.



Figure 16: Pit [3] in Trench 3 looking south-east



Figure 17: Ditch [6] in Trench 3 looking south-east

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located on the western edge of the development over a probable ditch running north-south highlighted on the geophysical survey (fig 18). The trench sloped slightly from the west down to the east.



Figure 18: Trench 4 looking east

Length 25m

Width 1.6m

Interval	W 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m E
Topsoil Depth	0.17m	0.15m	0.18m	0.16m	0.15m	0.16m
Subsoil Depth	0.12m	0.12m	0.13m	0.14m	0.15m	0.15m
Top of natural substratum	0.29m	0.27m	0.31m	0.20m	0.30m	0.31m
Base of trench	0.36m	0.34m	0.36m	0.40m	0.40m	0.42m

Along with a single south east-north west ceramic field drain two archaeological features were observed in Trench 4 (fig 19).

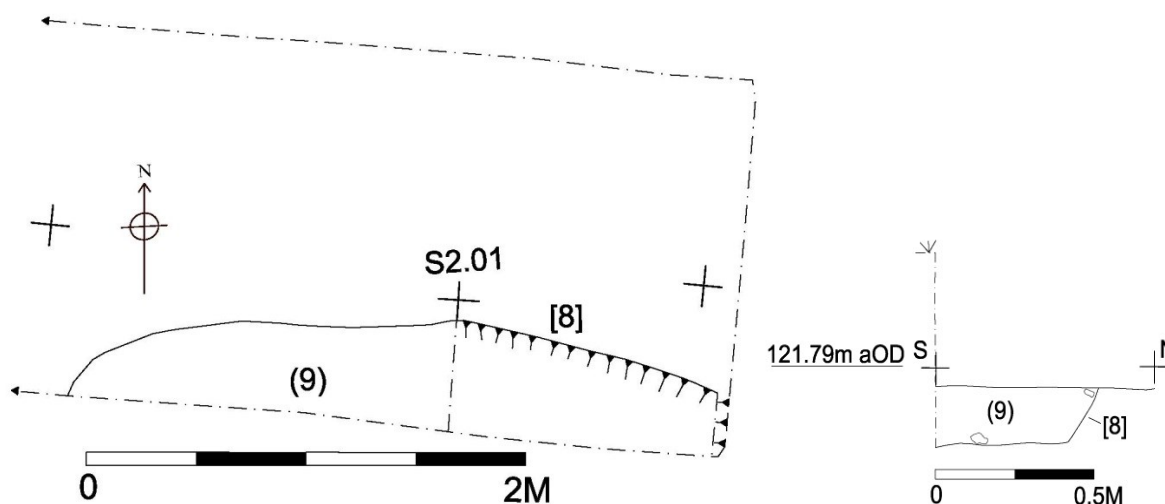


Figure 19 Plan and section of Pit [8] in Trench 4

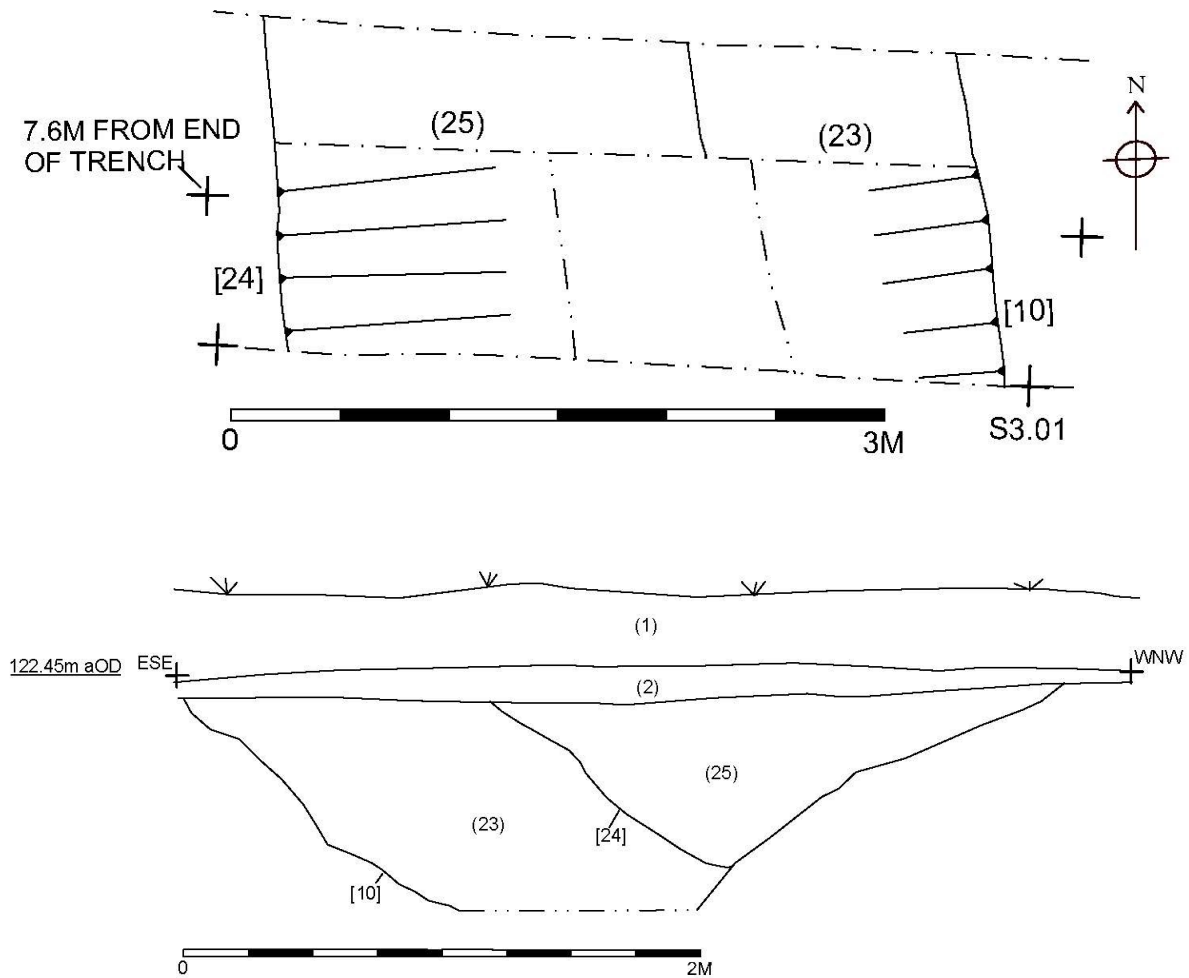


Figure 20: Plan and section of Ditch [10] in Trench 4

A possible elongated pit [8] was observed in south-east corner of the trench, although its full profile was only partially visible as it headed out of the excavation area (Fig. 21). The feature appeared to be at least 0.5m wide and 0.16m in depth, with 3m of the feature visible in the trench. Its north edge appeared moderately sloping with a flat base. It contained a single fill (9) comprising of a mid-grey brown silty clay with occasional sub rounded stone inclusions. Five Iron Age pottery sherds were recovered from this fill.

At 7.6m from the west end a large linear feature [10] was observed running north-south across the width of the excavation area (Fig. 22). The feature measured 3.42m in width and was excavated up to 1.15m in depth at which excavation ceased due to health and safety constraints. A single fill (23) was recorded consisting of a mid brownish grey silty-clay with occasional small-large sub rounded stones and occasional small charcoal and chalk flecks. Two Iron Age pottery sherds and animal bone were recovered from this fill. This feature also appeared to contain a smaller re-cut [24] on its west edge. This measured 1.7m in width and 0.65m in depth with moderately sloping sides leading to a concave base. It contained a single fill (25) consisting of a mid-yellowish-brown silty-clay with occasional charcoal fleck inclusions. Animal bone showing evidence of cattle and sheep/goat was recovered from this fill, along with a single secondary flint flake.



Figure 21: Possible elongated pit [8] in Trench 4 looking west



Figure 22: Ditch [10] and re-cut [24] in Trench 4 looking south

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located towards the south-east of the development area over possible geophysical anomalies as highlighted on the survey (Fig. 23). The trench sloped very slightly from north west-south east. A single narrow ceramic land drain was observed running south

east-north west at the north west end of the trench. No archaeological features were identified in the this trench, although a slight change in the natural geology to a more sandy gravel substratum was noted at the south east end, perhaps accounting for the possible geophysical anomalies.



Figure 19: Trench 5 looking south-east

Length 21m

Width 1.6m

Interval	NW 0m	5m	10m	15m	21mSE
Topsoil Depth	0.23m	0.19m	0.23m	0.21m	0.22m
Subsoil Depth	0.07m	0.07m	0.07m	0.08m	
Top of natural substratum	0.30m	0.26m	0.30m	0.29m	0.22m
Base of trench	0.40m	0.37m	0.37m	0.35m	0.37m

Trench 6

Trench 6 was located towards the south-western corner of the development area and targeted a possible north-south linear anomaly present on the geophysical survey (Fig. 24). The trench sloped slightly from west to the east.



Figure 20: Trench 6 looking east

Length 26m (extended 6m westward to define possible features)

Width 1.6m

Interval	W 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	26m E
Topsoil Depth	0.20m	0.18m	0.17m	0.13m	0.16m	0.15m
Subsoil Depth	0.12m	0.11m	0.13m	0.11m	0.13m	0.13m
Top of natural substratum	0.32m	0.29m	0.30m	0.24m	0.29m	0.28m
Base of trench	0.40m	0.34m	0.33m	0.32m	0.34m	0.32m

A single archaeological feature was observed in the base of trench 6 (Fig. 25)

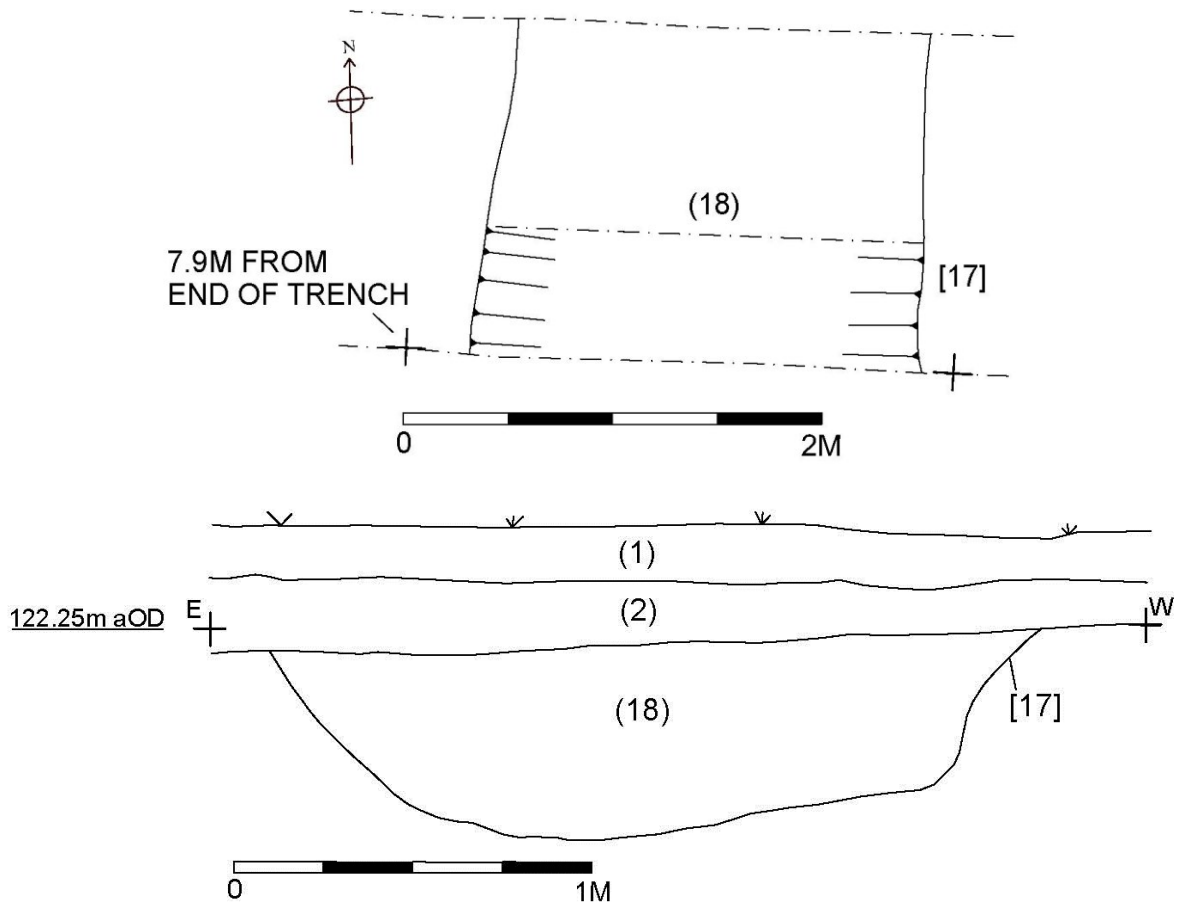


Figure 21: Plan and section of Ditch [17]

A single linear feature [17], a probable ditch was observed running north-south across the width of the trench (Fig. 26). The feature measured 2m in width and 0.53m in depth. It appeared to be a 'U' shaped cut with shallow sides and concave base. It contained a single fill (18) comprising of mid yellow brown silty-clay with mottled orange sands, with some sub angular stone inclusions. No finds were recovered from this feature.

This feature seems to correspond with the geophysical survey, although the feature is less clear on ground than it appears on the survey.



Figure 22: Ditch [17] in Trench 6 looking south

Trench 7

Trench 7 was located at the southern edge of the development area. It was located over anomalies highlighted on the geophysical survey (Fig. 27). Despite this, no archaeological features were observed and any geophysical responses were probably due to natural changes in the geology.

Length 22m

Width 1.6m

Interval	ESE 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	26m WNW
Topsoil Depth	0.21m	0.16m	0.2m	0.24m	0.18m	0.18m
Subsoil Depth	0.07m	0.11m	0.06m	0.06m	0.07m	0.10m
Top of natural substratum	0.28m	0.27m	0.26m	0.30m	0.25m	0.28m
Base of trench	0.40m	0.34m	0.31m	0.34m	0.30m	0.32m



Figure 23: Trench 7 looking south-east

Iron Age Pottery and Fired Clay

Nicholas J. Cooper

A total of 47 sherds (341g) of Iron Age pottery was recovered from nine contexts, classified according to the Leicestershire Prehistoric and Pottery fabric Series (Marsden 2011) and quantified by sherd count and weight. In addition, four amorphous fragments of fired clay (17g) came from (5), another (3g) from (20) and one more (6g) from (22), representing burnt debris from wattle and daub buildings or other structures such as hearths or ovens.

The complete quantified record is presented below (Table 1).

Table 1 Quantified Record by Fabric and Context

Nottingham Rd Melton XA6.2015 Iron Age Pottery						
Cut	Context	Fabric	Form/Rim	Decoration	Sherds	Weight
3	5	S1	body		2	9
6	7	S1	body		2	11
8	9	S1	base		5	19
10	23	R1	body		2	5
11	12	S1	body		2	6
15	16	S1	body	scored	8	60
15	16	Q1	body	scored	16	196
15	19	S1	body		1	7

15	20	S1	flat rim		1	2
15	20	S1	body		2	12
15	20	S2	base		4	9
	22	S1	body		1	2
	22	S2	upright rim		1	3
Total					47	341

The assemblage is in variable condition with the leaching of shell-temper from the sherds in (5), (7) and (20), for example, and this is reflected in the average sherd weight of 7g. However, the material from the fills of [15], notably from (16) is in good condition, with an average sherd weight of 11g and a number of joining sherds, with some external carbonised residues preserved. The range of fabrics is typical of Iron Age material in this part of the county with a predominance of shell-tempered (Fabric S1) and sandy shell-tempered (Fabric S2) wares, coupled with parts of a quartz sand-tempered vessel (Fabric Q1) from (16) and a single granite-tempered sherd (Fabric R1) from (23). The relative proportions of the S and Q fabrics is broadly comparable to that from the nearby hill fort at Burrough Hill (Percival 2012, 82, Table 5), though probably exaggerated by the single Q1 vessel from (16). That vessel has scored decoration and in the absence of diagnostic vessel forms would indicate that the assemblage belongs to the mid-late Iron Age East Midlands scored ware tradition (Elsdon 1992). The group only produced two small rim fragments; a tapered upright form from (22) and a flat, form from (20), both of which would be consistent with the tradition (Elsdon 1992, ill.1.4 and 6). The likely dating therefore lies between the 3rd century BC and the mid-1st century AD. The assemblage clearly indicates the potential for the preservation of stratified groups of pottery, which will be crucial to the chronological understanding of the site, if further work is undertaken.

The Flint *Lynden Cooper*

The small assemblage of four worked flints was recovered from four contexts. The raw material is local glacial till flint. Technologically the pieces are of flake technology and are likely of a later prehistoric date.

Table 2 The flint

Context	ID	No
(5) [3]	shatter	1
(16) [15]	2ry flake	1
(20) [15]	2ry flake	1
(25) [24]	2ry flake	1

The Animal Bones *Jennifer Browning*

Introduction and Dating

The animal bones recovered during hand-excavation from an evaluation at Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire were assessed to evaluate preservation and variety and

therefore provide an indication of the faunal potential, should the site progress to excavation. The features date to the Iron Age period.

The Assemblage: Preservation and Composition

The recovered sample consists of 75 fragments from nine different features, dating to the Iron Age. Preservation was generally very poor, with considerable loss of surface features and in some cases, erosion and loss of bone integrity. However, a small number of bones are inexplicably well-preserved. In addition, the assemblage is fragmented; both new and old breaks were observed. However, despite fragmentation and preservational issues, the assemblage produced evidence for a variety of species. Cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse and red deer were all positively identified in the assemblage. A red deer antler had cut marks and was probably intended as a raw material for creating artefacts. The presence of the burr indicated that the antler had been collected after being shed, rather than being taken from a hunted animal. The size suggests that it was from a well-grown stag. Similar antler fragments were recovered from a cache within a ditch at Manor Farm, Humberstone (Browning 2011, 111). The assemblage contained a single burnt bone and gnawing was also observed on some fragments. Several age-able teeth were also noted.

No bones from small species such as fish, birds or small mammals were seen among this small sample; poor soil conditions may have affected their survival.

Table 3 The Animal bone: Summary of bones recovered from each feature

Feature	No	Taxon	Element	Notes
(5) [3]	2	cattle	teeth	
(5) [3]	7	large mml	shaft fragments	
(5) [3]	1	cattle	calcaneum	part of body and articulation
(7) [6]	1	cattle	molar	lower 3rd, heavily worn- elderly animal
(7) [6]	1	cattle	mandible	7 x fragments of alveolar bone and diastema
(7) [6]	1	sheep/goat	tibia	distal shaft
(7) [6]	4	medium mml	shaft fragments	
(9) [8]	1	sheep/goat	molar	lower 3rd, fragments x 2
(14) [13]	4	large mml	rib fragments	
(14) [13]	1	sheep/goat	molar	upper
(16) [15]	1	medium mml	skull fragment	
(16) [15]	1	sheep/goat	tibia	distal unfused, fragments x 2
(16) [15]	1	medium mml	scapula	fragments x 2, unusually well-preserved
(19) [15]	1	large mml	vertebra	4 x fragments
(20) [15]	1	red deer	antler	large fragmented shed antler (n=26), cut marks noted on beam
(20) [15]	1	sheep/goat	radius	shaft fragment.
(20) [15]	4	large mml	rib fragment	
(20) [15]	4	large mml	shaft fragments	
(20) [15]	2	medium mml	shaft fragments	
(20) [15]	1	cattle	metatarsal	gnawed
(22) [21]	1	cattle	humerus	distal shaft, gnawed and possibly burnt
(23) [10]	1	cattle	molar	upper
(23) [10]	1	cattle	tibia	part of distal end, fused, unusually well-preserved
(23) [10]	1	large mml	shaft fragment	
(23) [10]	8	indeterminate	shaft fragments	
(23) [10]	1	medium mml	metacarpal	shaft fragment
(23) [10]	1	pig	humerus	part of distal shaft
(25) [24]	8	large mml	shaft fragments	

(25) [24]	1	cattle	calcaneum	fragment
(25) [24]	1	cattle	tibia	distal fused, fragment
(25) [24]	1	sheep/goat	tooth	very poorly preserved
(27) [26]	1	horse	tibia	proximal fused, min 4 fragments
(27) [26]	1	large mml	rib fragment	
(27) [26]	1	horse	pelvis	ilium, min 3 fragments
(27) [26]	4	large mml	shaft fragments	
(27) [26]	3	medium mml	shaft fragments	
Total	75			

Archaeological Potential

Despite the growing number of Iron Age sites in the region, the recovery of environmental remains and animal bones is a research priority for environmental archaeology in the East Midlands (Monckton 2006, 272), as many sites have produced relatively small and poorly preserved animal bone assemblages. However, an Iron Age settlement at Enderby (Gouldwell 1991) produced a substantial animal bone assemblage, which could provide useful comparison and large and useful faunal assemblages were recovered from Humberstone, Leicester (Charles 2000 and Browning 2011), which have helped shed further light on animal husbandry, butchery, cultural practices and diet within the region. In the wider landscape, Iron Age sites at Tixover (Baxter 1991) and Crick (Hammon 1998) as well as material from numerous smaller interventions could help place the site in its regional context. While poor preservation may limit the available information from the assemblage, the quantity and species variety of the sample recovered during evaluation is encouraging. Therefore, the recovery of a larger sample during any subsequent excavation could provide useful insights into the use of animal resources.

The Charred Plant Remains

Rachel Small

Introduction

Four samples were taken from ditch fills associated with Iron Age material. Plant remains, which may include cereal grains, chaff, and weed seeds, provide evidence for past food production, consumption, agricultural practises and environment.

Method

The samples were scanned to assess their potential; sample 2 appeared sterile and therefore was not processed. One part of the remaining samples was processed in a York tank using a 0.5mm mesh with flotation into a 0.3mm mesh sieve. The flotation fractions (flots) were transferred into plastic boxes and left to air dry; they were then sorted for plant remains using a x10-40 stereo microscope. The residues were also air dried and the fractions over 4mm sorted for all finds. The fractions under 4mm were scanned for remains.

Results

Modern rootlets, snail shells and worm egg shells were present in the samples (table 1) suggesting a level of disturbance to the contexts. Charcoal was present and most common in sample 1. Plant remains were absent in samples 3 (23) and 4 (27); three large grass (Poaceae)

seeds were present in sample 1 (16). Small indeterminate fragments of animal bone were recovered from the fractions over 4mm.

*Table 4: summary of remains found in samples.
Key: rare is equivalent to 0 – 10 items, common 0 – 50 items.*

Sample	Context	Cut	Litres	Notes
1	16	15	6	Rootlets rare, snail shells and charcoal ($\geq 2\text{mm}$) common, 3 large grass seeds (Poaceae).
2	18	19	N/A	Sterile.
3	23	10	7	Rootlets, worm egg shells, snail shells and charcoal ($\geq 2\text{mm}$) rare.
4	27	26	7	Rootlets, worm egg shells and snail shells rare, charcoal flecks.

Discussion

No further work is necessary on the samples discussed. The presence of charcoal does suggest the potential for the survival of charred plant remains; therefore, if further excavation is undertaken at the site, or in the vicinity, the implementation of a suitable sampling strategy is recommended.

Conclusion

University of Leicester Archaeological Services carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. The work involved the machine excavation of seven trial trenches in order to provide a c.2% of the area following positive results from a geophysical survey (Richardson 2015)

The topsoil and subsoil appeared relatively consistent across the site with the topsoil made up of dark greyish brown silty-clay loam with 5% pebbles. Slight Variations in the amount of subsoil were evident across the seven trenches, probably due to truncation from agricultural ploughing and farming of the land from the medieval period to the present day. A network of field drains was present across the site, evident in trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. All of these appeared to run roughly south east-north west.

Whilst trenches 5 and 7 appeared void of archaeological features, archaeological features were observed in trenches 1,2,3,4 and 6. Apart from [3], all features appeared to represent linear features, (ditches and gullies) which confirmed anomalies identified on the geophysical survey. In conjunction with this the evaluation also identified features not visible on the geophysical survey, such as [6] seen in trench 3. Pottery was recovered from the majority of features, with particularly diagnostic sherds indicating a mid-late Iron Age date, suggesting these features could be part of an Iron Age settlement and enclosure system. The animal bone assemblage yielded a variety of species including cattle, pig, horse, sheep/goat and red deer, showing potential in providing insights into the use of animal resources on the site. The flint assemblage was minimal, although it does show potential for providing information into the usage of flint on the site. Environmental samples taken from (16) indicate the presence of charred plant remains and further sampling would be suggested if any further archaeological work is conducted in the future.

The archaeological deposits appear to confirm the information suggested from the geophysical survey that a small Iron Age settlement or farmstead was present on the site during the mid to late Iron Age. While such mid to late Iron Age settlements are not

uncommon in the East Midlands (Willis 2006) this evaluation has highlighted that the site has good potential for the survival of economic information (animal bone and charred plant remains) which is often absent from similar sites.

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A6.2016), consisting of paper and photographic records in addition to ceramic, bone and flint finds, will be deposited with Leicestershire Museum Service.

The paper archive consists of:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report
- 1 CD containing report and digital photographs
- Trench records sheets
- Photographic record indices
- Digital photographs
- Drawing sheets and indices
- Context indices
- Context sheets

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) at the University of York

ID	OASIS entry summary
Project Name	Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire
Project Type	Evaluation trenches
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Andy Hyam
Previous/Future work	Desk-based assessment; geophysical survey.
Current Land Use	Pasture
Development Type	Residential dwellings
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-application
Site Co ordinates	SK 74111 21026
Post-code	

Height (metres above O.D.)	115-125m
Start/end dates of field work	18/1/2016 – 21/1/2016
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Study Area	1.15 ha.
Associated project reference codes	Museum accession ID X.A6.2016 OASIS ID: universi1-244288

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