University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

# An Archaeological Evaluation at Shawell Quarry Extension West, Prosser Land, Shawell, Leicestershire (SP 53541 81797)

Roger Kipling

ULAS Report No 2014-205

# An Archaeological Evaluation at Shawell Quarry Extension West, Prosser Land, Shawell, Leicestershire (SP 53541 81797)

**Roger Kipling**

**For: Lafarge Aggregates Ltd**

Approved by:

**Signed:** 

**Date**: 01/12/2014

**Name:** Patrick Clay

**University of Leicester**
Archaeological Services
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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# An Archaeological Evaluation at Shawell Quarry Extension West, Prosser Land, Shawell, Leicestershire (SP 53541 81797)

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## Summary

*An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken in November 2014 at Shawell Quarry Extension West, Shawell, Leicestershire, by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Lafarge Tarmac Aggregates Ltd. The fieldwork was undertaken as a post-determination planning condition for an extension to an existing mineral works in order to assess the potential impact of the development on any archaeological remains that may have been present.*

*The archaeological evaluation at Shawell Quarry Extension West, Shawell, produced no indications of archaeology, with the exception of several medieval plough furrows. As such this reflects the findings of earlier desk-based assessment, fieldwalking and geophysical surveys and trial trench evaluations indicating an absence of archaeological activity in the vicinity of the assessment area.*

*The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under accession reference number X.A150.2014.*


## Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land at Shawell Quarry Extension West at Shawell, Leicestershire. Whilst the Historic Environment Record indicates that the application area has produced no archaeological remains, there are known local concentrations of archaeological significance, located mainly in the medieval historic cores of Shawell and Cotesbach close to the site. Prehistoric sites are known from similar terrains in the Lutterworth and Misterton areas 3 km to the north and north-east. The area is also relatively close to significant Roman sites at *Tripontium* (Churchover, Warwickshire) and the Watling Street Roman road while Anglo Saxon and medieval evidence is known from Cotesbach.

In consequence the planning authority recommended the need for 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, consisting of the construction of buildings, access routes and ponds. The agreed scheme was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Archaeologica Ltd (Lisboa 2014).

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 2014 and involved the machine excavation of six trial trenches in order to provide a *c*. 2% sample of the development area.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance 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 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 development area is located off the A426 Rugby Road, south of the village of Cotesbach on the north-eastern edge of Shawell quarry and consists of agricultural land. The British Geological Survey notes that the underlying geology of the site consists of boulder clay and glacial moraine drift over Jurassic Lower Lias clays. (http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html. The site is flat or very gently sloping and lies at a height of *c.*130m OD. The area is located on a ridge of high ground which separated the valleys within which the Swift and Avon lie.

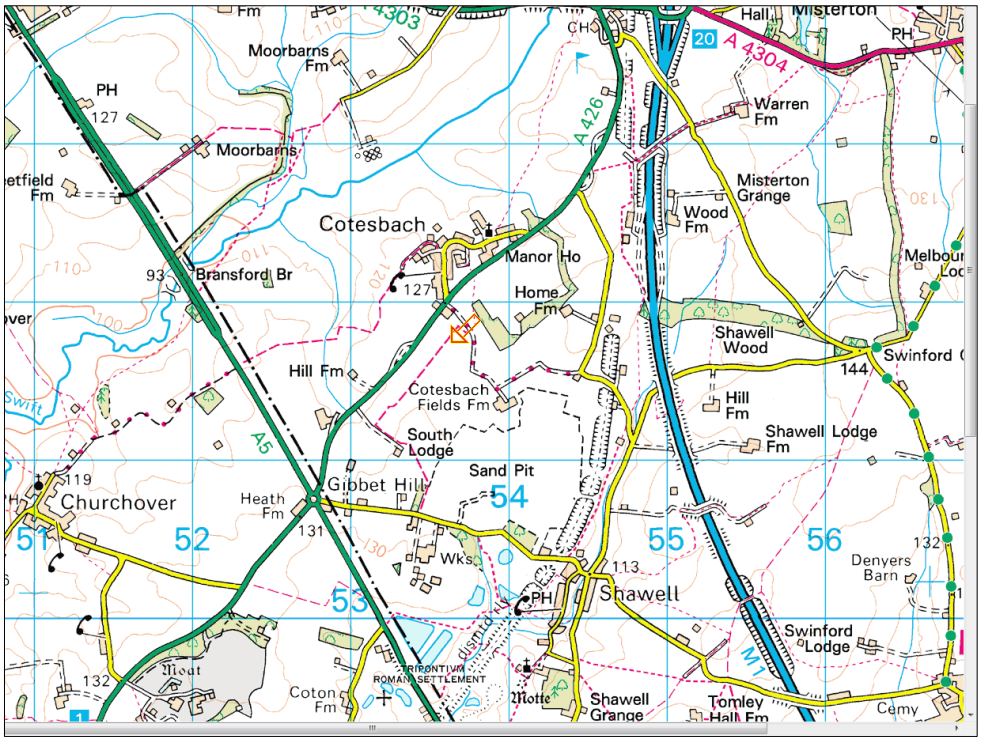


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

*Reproduced from the Landranger 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495*

## Archaeological and Historical Background

An archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared for the area (Lisboa 2012). The Historic Environment Record indicates that the surrounding landscape has produced finds belonging to a variety of periods, with known local concentrations of archaeological significance, located mainly in the medieval historic cores of Shawell and Cotesbach close to the site. Prehistoric sites are known from similar terrains in the Lutterworth and Misterton areas 3 km to the north and north-east.

The line of the Roman Watling Street (HER Ref: **MLE1388**) runs along the line of the current A5 where the cable trench would connect to the national grid. The line of the Roman Lutterworth Road is located further to the east (**MLE1902**). Within the village of Shawell lie a number of pebble pavements, which may be Roman in origin, although they could just as easily be medieval yard surfaces (**MLE8947; MLE8948; MLE8950**).

An Anglo-Saxon cemetery is recorded from 19th century records near Bransford Bridge, Cotesbach (**MLE1414**) while Cotesbach has medieval origins (**MLE10383**). Shawell is also of medieval origin and the medieval settlement core has been deduced using early maps (**MLE8951**). There are earthworks dating from the medieval period at the eastern and western edges of the villages revealing the shrunken nature of the village (**MLE2334; MLE2341**). Sherds of medieval pottery have been found within the core of the village (**MLE6766**).

## Previous Work in the Application Area and Environs

Geophysical survey consisting of 100% magnetic susceptibility and 100% magnetometry survey was undertaken on behalf of the Applicant by the Bartlett-Clark Consultancy (Bartlett 2013). Findings in Field 1 consisted of minor, likely modern, disturbances near boundaries, and some weak linear markings which may be cultivation effects (Figure. 3 A). An isolated strong magnetic anomaly (Figure 3 B) to the north of the field indicated in red was interpreted as a possible pit feature.

Archaeological investigative work was undertaken to the east of Cotesbach Fields Farm, in 1998 and 1999, on the site of the present quarry and silt lagoons, involving geophysical survey (Butler 1998), test pit evaluation (Gossip 1998) and an archaeological watching brief (Meek 1999). The only results were upstanding ridge and furrow which were subject to an earthwork survey. A subsequent watching brief proved negative (Coward 2009).

Following submission of an application for an extension to the south of the Application Site in 2006, a programme of geophysical survey was undertaken which indicated some pits which might have been of archaeological origin. As part of the same programme, trenching was undertaken with some trenches targeted at the anomalies but no archaeological features were identifying suggesting the anomalies were of geological origin. Other than furrows, the results were negative (Coward 2009).

The results from the intermittent watching brief during overburden stripping at Shawell Quarry were limited. Medieval ridge and furrow strip field systems were observed in phases 8 and 9, the latter area also showing evidence of a 20th century trackway. The very few finds recovered were from Field 3 in the eastern area and may have been introduced by manuring (Coward 2009).

## Aims and Objectives

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

*The Roman Period (Taylor 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2012)*

- The nearby sites of Watling Street and Tripontium are suggestive of Roman activity in the area. 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 village core 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.

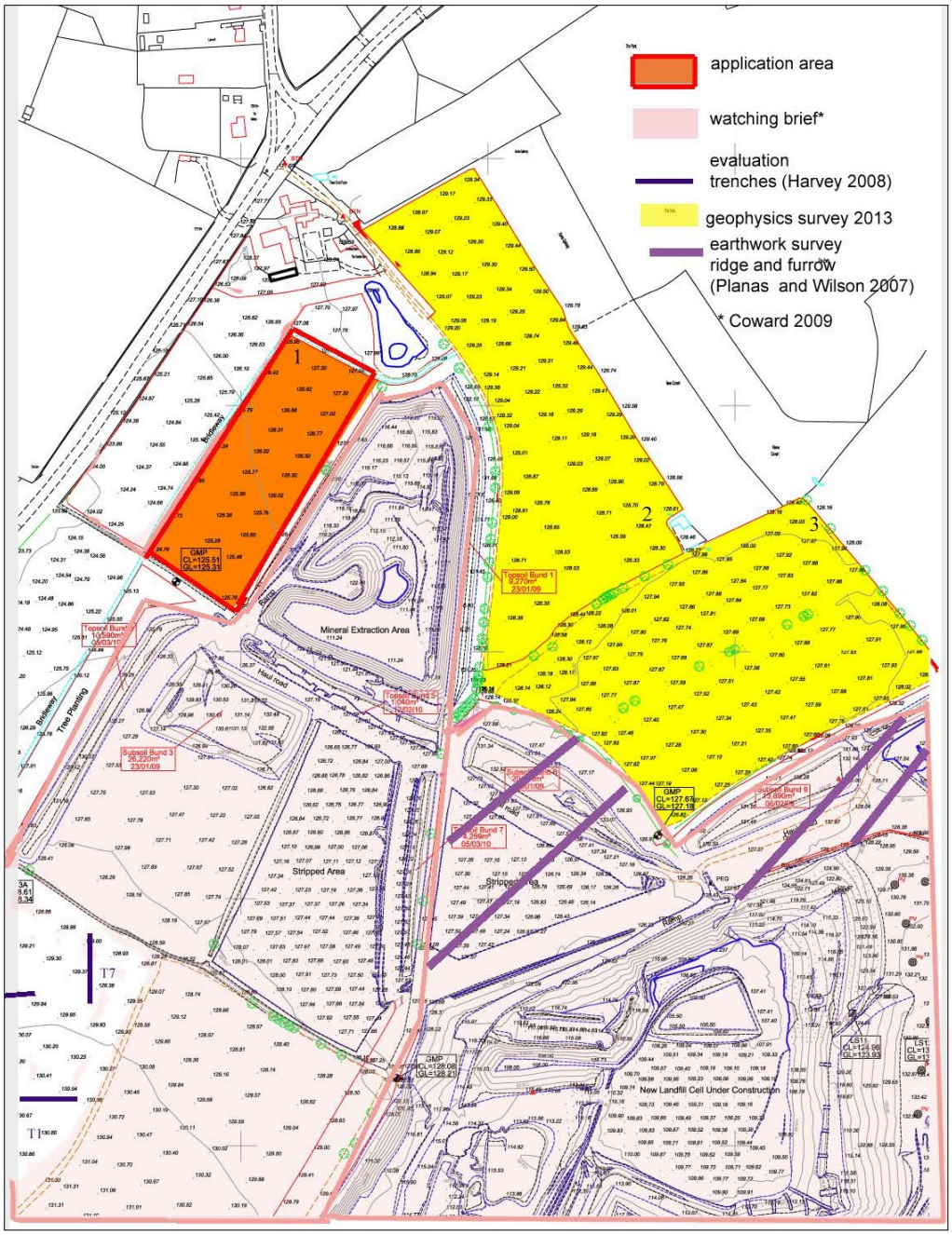


Figure 2: Location of the archaeological evaluation in relation to previously evaluated areas

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.

## Methodology

### *Archaeological Trial Trenches*

Prior to the commencement of works an Accession Code was obtained and the required archive deposition forms completed. An OASIS online record was initiated and the key fields completed on Details, Location and Creator forms.

Following recommendations from the Planning Archaeologist, a programme of evaluation trenching was undertaken. A 2% sample of the area of development was excavated, comprising 270m² of six trenches each measuring 25m x 1.80m. Trench locations were in accordance with plans set out in the brief, targeting anomalies revealed through an earlier geophysical survey (Figure 3).

Topsoil and overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (*c.*1.80m 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 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.

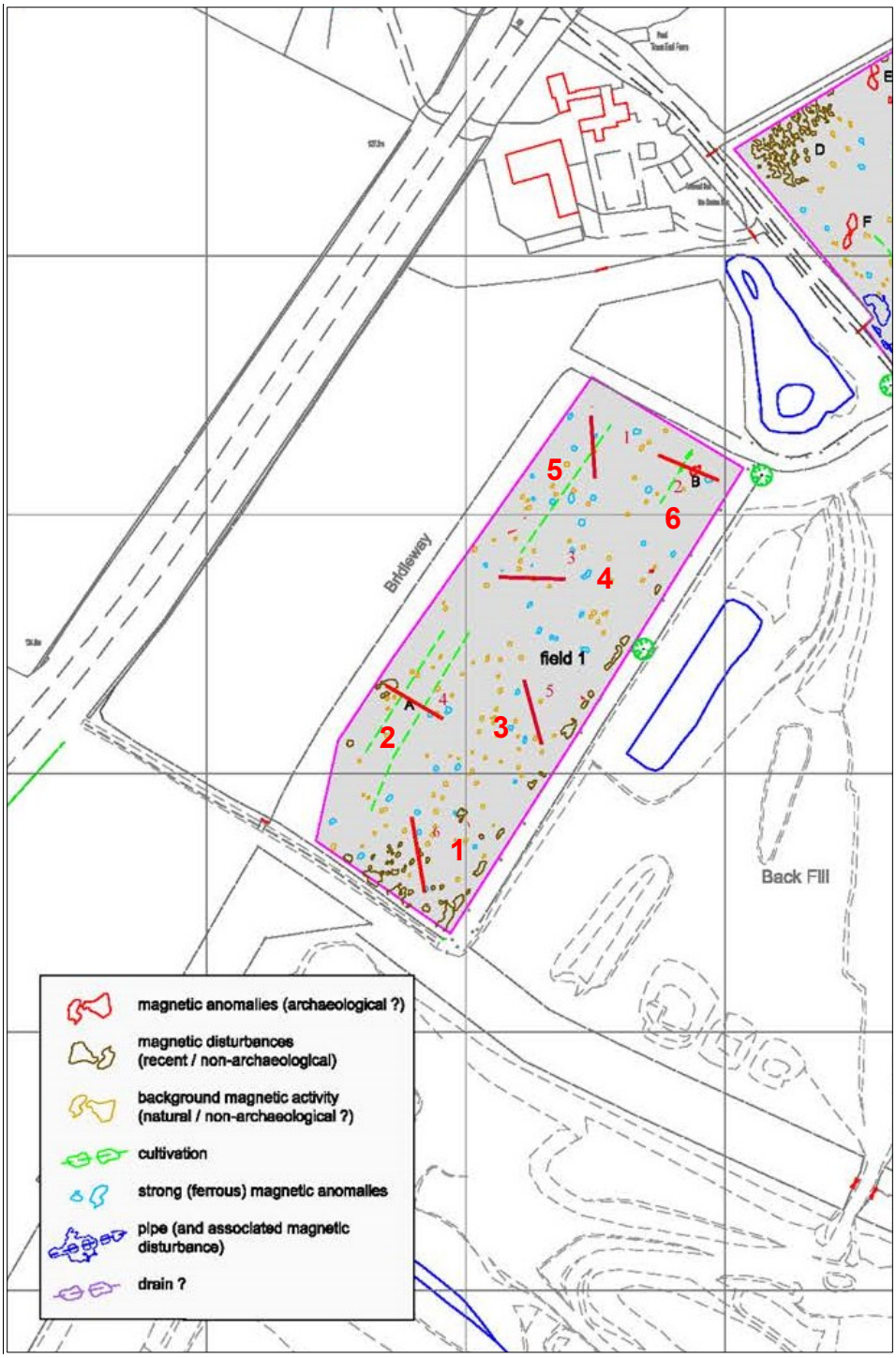


Figure 3: Trench location plan overlain on the development plan (provided by client)

Figure 4: Machining in operation

## Results

A 2% sample of the area of development was excavated, comprising *c.*270m² of six trenches measuring 25m x 1.80m. Trenches were positioned in accordance with plans set out in the WSI, primarily targeting the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey and also in order to provide a representative survey of the development area. Excavation was undertaken using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.80 wide toothless ditching bucket, with topsoil and overburden removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

As the six trenches (**1-6**) opened during the course of the archaeological evaluation produced broadly comparable results, they will be discussed as a group. All featured a 0.24m-0.36m thick dark orange-grey silty loam plough soil overlying a thin pale orange-brown silty-clay subsoil containing occasional large sub-rounded pebbles and charcoal flecking. The natural substratum was a yellow-orange clay with infrequent gravel patching.

Medieval plough furrows featured in all six trenches, and comprised the only archaeological evidence from the evaluation (Figure 5, Figure 6 & Figure 7 as representative examples). Results were consistent with the geophysical survey, with regularly spaced 2m-3m wide furrows running on a north-east to south-west alignment, with the exception of **Trench 5**, located in the north-eastern corner of the evaluation area, which was characterised by two furrows aligned east-west.

**Trench 6**, located in the north-eastern corner of the evaluation area, was positioned in order to investigate a possible pit revealed by the geophysical survey. A *c.*1.20m wide rectangular or square feature encountered *c.*6.5m from the west end of the trench cutting a furrow and containing abundant cinders, clinker and burnt modern ceramic building material fragments is likely to represent the source of the geophysical survey anomaly.

Figure 5: Trench 1

Figure 6: Trench 2

Figure 7: Trench 6

## Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation at Shawell Quarry Extension West, Shawell, produced no indications of archaeology, with the exception of a number of medieval plough furrows and a small modern feature, all of which had been detected in the earlier geophysical survey. As such this reflects the findings of the desk-based archaeological and previous archaeological work in the vicinity indicating the absence of archaeological evidence within the assessment area.

**Table 1 Trench details**

| TRENCH | ORIENTATION | LENGTH AND WIDTH (metres) | DESCRIPTION | DEPTH (MIN-MAX metres) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | NNW-SSE | 25 x 1.80 | Topsoil 0.31-0.36m, subsoil 0.17-0.26m. Single medieval plough furrow. | 0.60-0.65 |
| **2** | E-W | 25 x 1.80 | Topsoil 0.28-0.40m, subsoil 0.08-0.16m. Medieval plough furrows. | 0.40-0.60 |
| **3** | SE-NW | 25 x 1.80 | Topsoil 0.28-0.36m, subsoil 0.14-0.25m. Single medieval plough furrow. | 0.48-0.62 |
| **4** | WSW-ENE | 25 x 1.80 | Topsoil 0.26-0.38m, subsoil 0.1-0.23m. Medieval plough furrows. | 0.44-0.62 |
| **5** | SE-NW | 25 x 1.80 | Topsoil 0.28-0.35m, subsoil 0.08-0.14m. Medieval plough furrows. | 0.39-0.53 |
| **6** | NW-SE | 25 x 1.80 | Topsoil 0.28-0.31m, subsoil 0.04-0.15m. Medieval plough furrows. | 0.32-0.50 |

## Archive and Publications

The site archive, consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession Reference Number X.A150.2014.

The archive consists of:

- 6 trench recording sheets
- Photographic record index
- 14 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

Adam Clayton and Roger Kipling of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of Lafarge Tarmac Aggregates Ltd. Plant was provided by Planters Ltd. The project was managed by Patrick Clay. Isabel Lisboa of Archaeologica Ltd commissioned the work on behalf of the client. Richard Clark monitored the work on behalf of the planning authority.

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**Oasis Information**

| | |
|---|---|
| Project Name | Land at Shawell Quarry Extension West, Shawell, Leicestershire |
| Project Type | Archaeological evaluation |
| Project Manager | Patrick Clay |
| Project Supervisor | Roger Kipling |
| Previous/Future work | Geophysical survey |
| Current Land Use | Agricultural |
| Development Type | Aggregates quarrying |
| Reason for Investigation | NPPF |
| Position in the Planning Process | Post-determination condition |
| Site Co ordinates | SP 53541 81797 |
| Start/end dates of field work | 26th November 2014 |
| Archive Recipient | Leicestershire Museums Service |
| Study Area | |

Roger Kipling
ULAS
University of Leicester

University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel:0116 252 2836
Fax: 0116 252 2614

Email: rwk1@le.ac.uk

## Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay
University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS)
University of Leicester,
University Road,
Leicester LE1 7RH

**T:** +44 (0)116 252 2848
**F:** +44 (0)116 252 2614
**E:** ulas@le.ac.uk
**w:** www.le.ac.uk/ulas

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