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Archaeological Services

An archaeological field evaluation on
Land North of Fircone, Farthing Lane,
Curdworth,
Warwickshire
(SP 1815 2940)

James Patrick



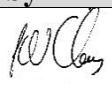
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**An archaeological field evaluation on land North of Fircone Lane
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(SP 1815 2940)**

James Patrick

for

Mr M. Jones

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CONTENTS

Summary	1
Introduction	1
Site Location, Details and Geology	2
Historical and Archaeological Background	3
Archaeological Objectives	4
Methodology	4
Results	7
The Medieval Pottery – <i>D. Sawday</i>	12
The charred plant remains - <i>Rachel Small</i>	13
Conclusion	14
Acknowledgements	14
Publication	14
Archive	15
Bibliography	15

FIGURES

Figure 1: General Site Location	2
Figure 2: Site location within Curdworth (Plan provided by Client)	2
Figure 3: 1887 OS map with site indicated in red.	4
Figure 4: Development area showing original trench locations	5
Figure 5: Actual Trench location	6
Figure 6: Trench 1 showing sections and plan	8
Figure 7: Excavating Trench along building footprint , looking south	9
Figure 8: Trench looking south at medieval pit.	9
Figure 9: Pit [01[looking south with 1 metre scale	10
Figure 10: Trench extension showing excavated ditch [03] looking east	10
Figure 11: Ditch [03[looking East with 1 metre and 0.30 metre scale	11

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Summary

An archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land North of Fircone, Farthing Lane, Curdworth, Warwickshire (SP 1815 2940).

The work was in advance of the construction of a single detached house with associated works. Two trenches were initially planned; one 15 metre trench across the footing of the building and another 10 metre trench across the planned driveway. The latter had to be abandoned due extensive thick tree roots from an old Ash tree bordering Farthing Lane from the development land. The Evaluation was undertaken due the study areas close proximity to a moated site at Curdworth Hall Farm at the east side of Curdworth (MWA43) directly to the east of the proposed development site. The moat is reputed to mark the site of the former manor house (MWA6227). As a result the development could affect archaeological remains therefore necessitating the need for archaeological investigation. The fifteen metre trench (Trench 1) proved positive for archaeological remains. This was in the form of a plot boundary ditch, possible rubbish pit, and a post hole meeting the possible expectations of the evaluation. The former two features contained Medieval pottery. The archive for this work will be deposited with Warwickshire Museums with accession number 2016.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Mr M. Jones to carry out an archaeological field evaluation on land North of Fircone, Farthing Lane, Curdworth, Warwickshire (SP1815 2940; Fig. 1). This archaeological work is in accordance with NPPF Section 12: Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment.

Planning permission has been granted by North Warwickshire Borough Council for the erection of one dwelling with associated works on land north of Fircone Cottage, Farthing Lane, Curdworth, B76 9HE, subject to planning conditions for archaeological fieldwork (PAP/2015/0473).

Archaeological trial trenching was therefore requested by Warwickshire County Council in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the planning authority and a brief for archaeological work was provided (Warwickshire County Council 2016).

Site Location, Details and Geology

The plot of land is on the West frontage of Farthing Lane, north of Fircone Cottage and south of Ashleigh Farm. It comprises of a paddock / orchard now un-used, bounded by Farthing Lane to the east and houses to the south with hedgerows and wooden fencing to the west and north. The site is of an irregular shape with a curve forming the north-east boundary (Fig. 2).

It covers an area of c. 0.05 hectares within which will be constructed a single dwelling with an associated driveway and parking (Planning Ref: PAP/2015/0473).

The Geological Survey of England & Wales, Sheet 155 shows the site to lie on Mercia Mudstone and Formation. The site lies at a height of c.90.4m aOD.

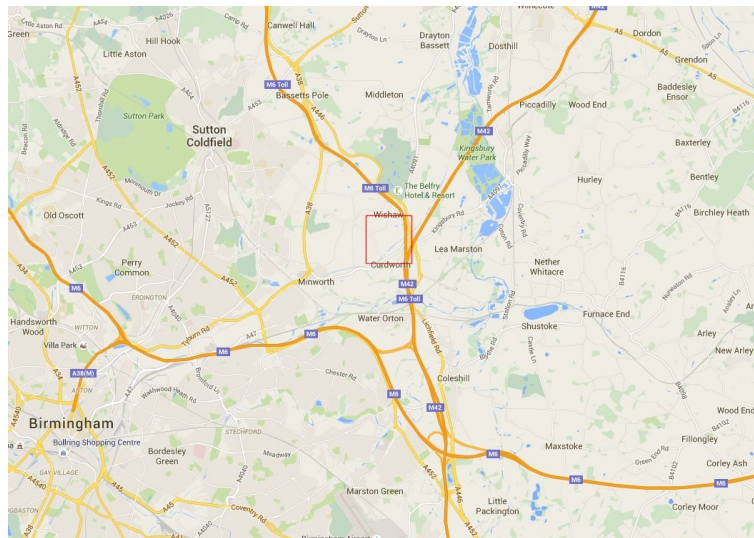


Figure 1: General Site Location

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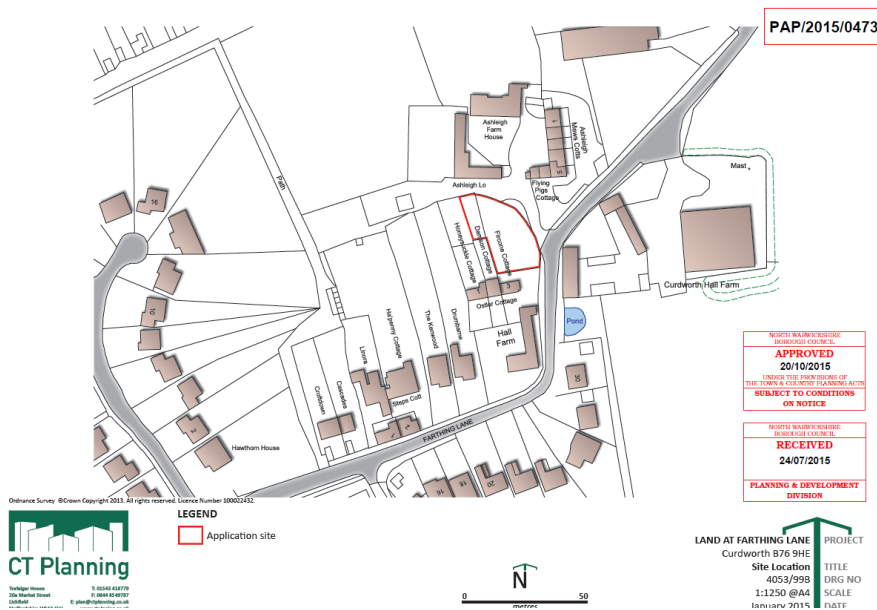


Figure 2: Site location within Curdworth (Plan provided by Client)

Historical and Archaeological Background

The Warwickshire HER identifies a number of archaeological features and finds in the area (Appendix 1). Previous archaeological work includes archaeological work undertaken for the construction of the M6 toll and the Northern Relief Road between 2000-2003 (Powell et.al. 2001, Oxford-Wessex 2001), as well as several watching briefs in the village.

There are also a number of cropmarks that suggest later prehistoric activity around the village of Wishaw to the north including a pit alignments (**MWA13455**, **MWA13458**) and enclosures (**MWA13456**, **MWA13457**, **MWA884**) suggesting prehistoric settlement.

Linear features of unknown date were uncovered just to the east during trial trenching in connection with the Birmingham Northern Relief Road project (**MWA9098**). A pit of unknown date was also uncovered (**MWA9099**).

The site lies within on the north-east edge of the medieval settlement core of Curdworth (**MWA 9590**). The village was first recorded by the King of Mercia between AD 586-593. The name 'Curdworth' means Creoda's Clearing' later mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086. During the time of the survey, Curdworth lay in the Coleshill Hundred and comprised 480 acres of arable land, 16 acres of meadow, and some woodland held by Thorkill of Warwick. The development area lies in close proximity to a well preserved moated site (**MWA43**) where a former manor house (**MWA6227**) is reputed to have stood, now within the grounds of Curdworth Hall Farm. As this is situated immediately to the east of the development area, there is therefore potential for medieval structural remains with associated boundaries and other features.

There are a number of farms on the area but the majority of the Listed Buildings lie within the village centre to the south-west.

There are no surviving enclosure maps for Curdworth, although a reconstruction of the 1791 Award shows the fields and their name and owners, but little detail. The 1887 1st edition OS shows the site as much the same as it today with Hall Farm and the cottages to the south visible as well as Curdworth Hall Farm with its moat to the west and the main change being the infilling of much of the open land and sandpit between the site and Coleshill Road with modern housing.



Figure 3: 1887 OS map with site indicated in red.

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.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was 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 (2014) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014). The archaeological work followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological work* (WSI) prepared by ULAS (2016).

The original trench plan was for one 15m trench across the area of the new building and one 10m long trench along the frontage with the road where the driveway was to be constructed (Fig. 3).

The trenches were excavated by a JCB excavator ditching bucket under archaeological supervision and backfilled after excavation and recording the trench was. The 10 metre trench, close to the frontage had to be abandoned due to extensive thick roots from the

adjacent mature trees. The 15m north-south trench across the building footprint was extended east as far as the tree roots, following the discovery of archaeology to determine which direction the plot boundary ditch was running (Figs 5, 7).



Figure 4: Development area showing original trench locations

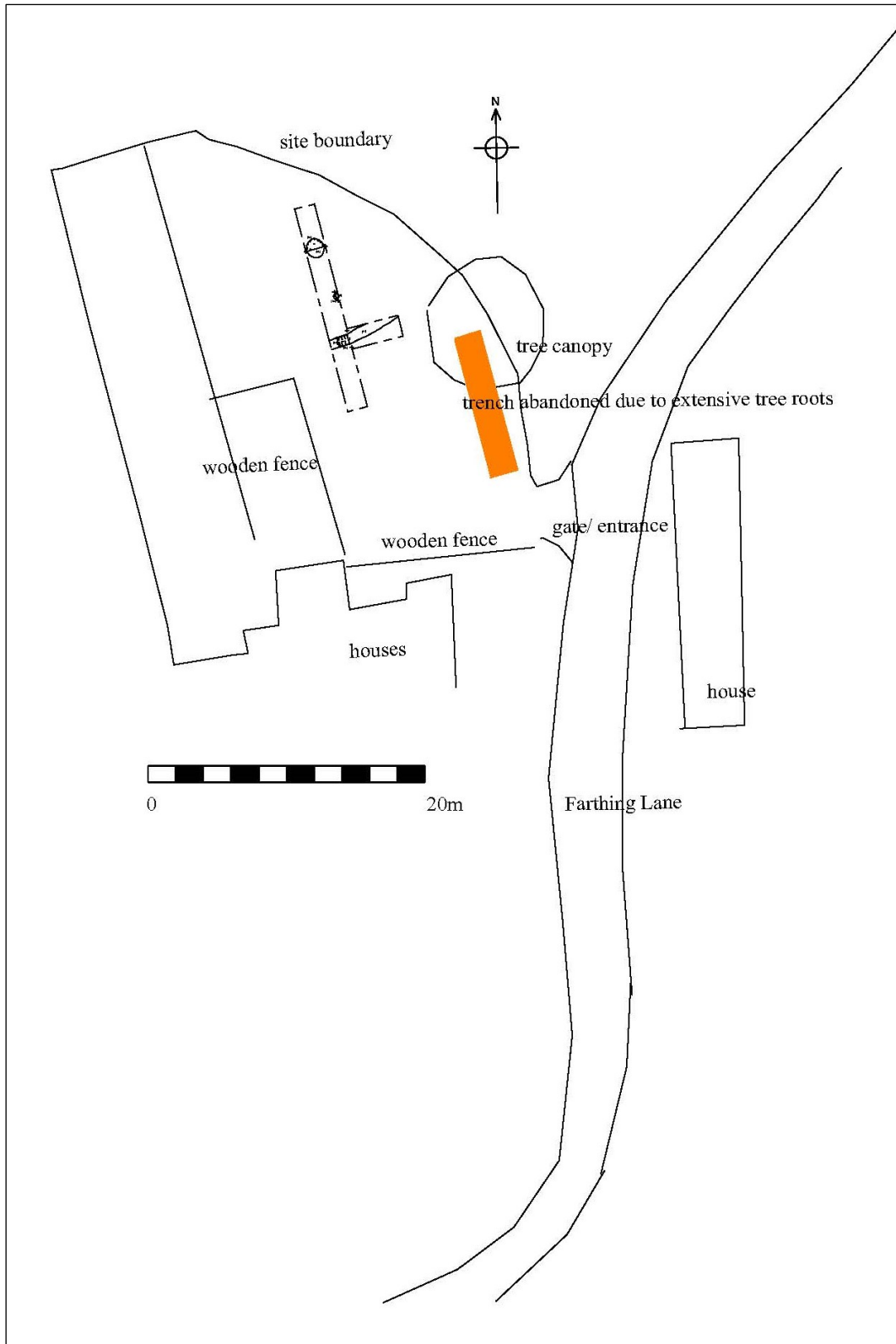


Figure 5: Actual Trench location

Results

Trench 01

Orientation: North to South

Length: 15m

Width: 1.5m

Topsoil: Dark greyish brown friable loam with small frequent rounded pebbles, frequent coal flecks with post- medieval and medieval pottery.

Subsoil: Light yellowish brown friable loam with occasional small rounded pebbles and occasional coal flecks.

Natural Substratum: Light yellow silty sand with mottled bioturbation. Areas of red clay with iron-stone

Contexts: [01] (02), [03] (04), [05] (06)

Interval	SW 0m	3m	6m	9m	12m	15m
Topsoil Depth	0.28	0.30	0.34	0.28	0.30	0.38
Subsoil Depth	0.20	0.30	0.26	0.20	0.20	0.18
Top of natural	0.48	0.60	0.60	0.48	0.50	0.56
Base of Trench	0.60	0.70	0.60	0.50	0.50	0.56

At the north end of the trench a well-defined circular pit [01] was revealed measuring approximately 1.30m in diameter and 0.32m deep with concave sides and base (Figs 6. 8-9). The main fill (02) consisted of a dark yellowish-grey fine sandy-silt with a few charcoal and coal flecks and rounded pebbles. The fill contained a number of large pot sherds dating to the 12th -14th century (see *The Medieval Pottery* below). Environmental analysis also showed the deposit to be rich in seeds (see *The Charred Plant Remains*).

An east to west aligned ditch [03] was identified crossing the south end of the trench (Fig. 6). A 3.50m extension to the trench was excavated to determine the direction of the ditch which continued east although curving slightly north –east. An excavated slot found that the ditch had straight sides with a moderate gradient on the north becoming steeper on the west side forming a gradual break of slope onto a flat base (Figs 6, 10-11). The ditch was 0.28m deep with a mid-yellowish brown silty-clay fill (04) which contained a single sherd of medieval pottery.

Situated between the ditch and the pit was a small feature [05] partially lying under the eastern trench edge but identified as a post hole. It was well defined in plan with the same colour fill (06) as ditch fill (04) although it had a sandy-silt consistency. It was circular in shape 0.32m diameter with straight sides, 0.10m deep. No finds were recovered from the fill.

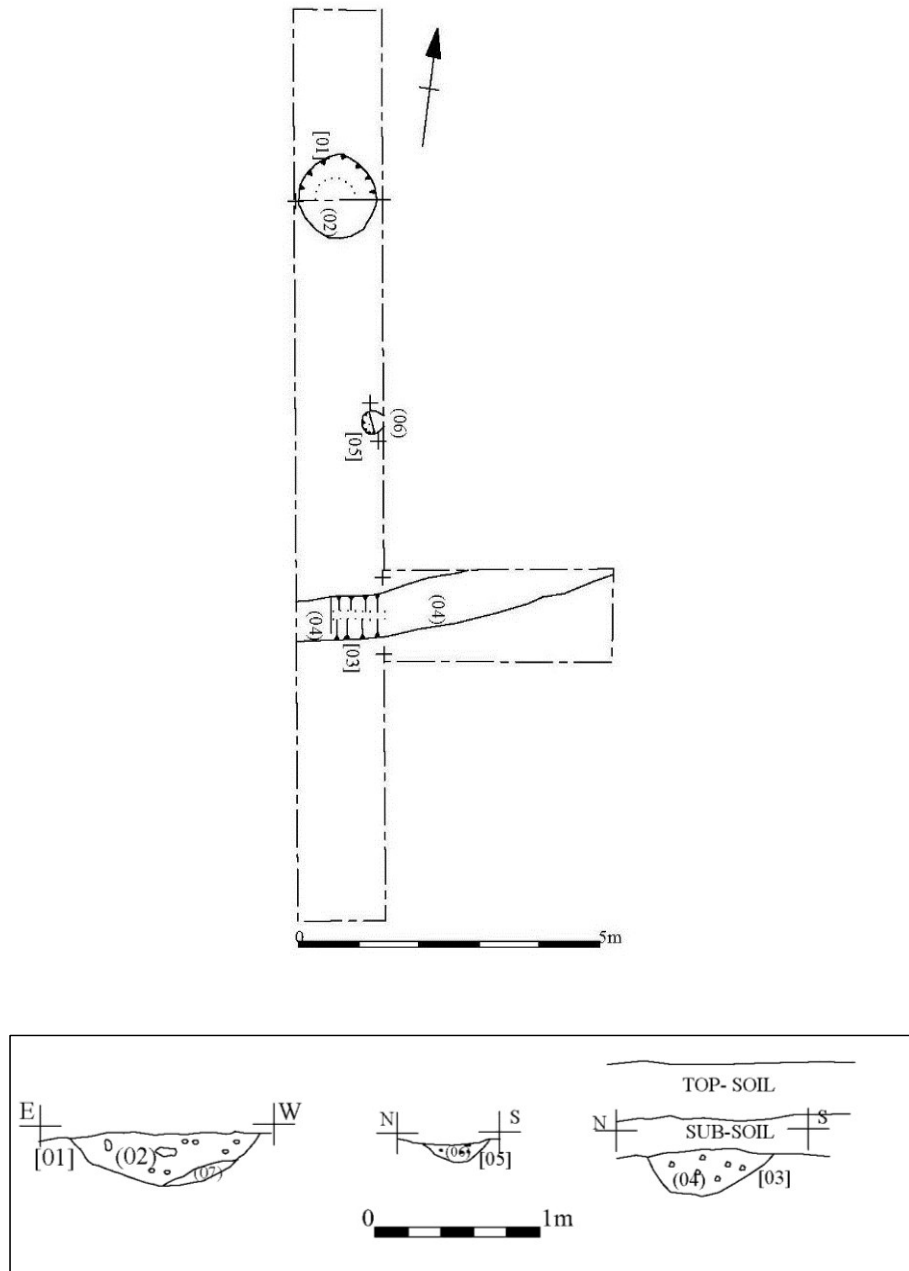


Figure 6: Trench 1 showing sections and plan



Figure 7: Excavating Trench along building footprint , looking south.



Figure 8: Trench looking south at medieval pit.



Figure 9: Pit [01] looking south with 1 metre scale



Figure 10: Trench extension showing excavated ditch [03] looking east



Figure 11: Ditch [03] looking East with 1 metre and 0.30 metre scale

The Medieval Pottery – D. Sawday

The pottery, ten sherds, weighing 205 grams, was scanned and catalogued with reference to the to the Warwickshire County Council pottery fabric series (Ratkai and Soden1998). The results are shown below.

Table 1: The pottery by context, ware/fabric, number and weight (grams)

Site/ Parish: Farthing Lane, Curdworth, near Birmingham, Warwicks		Submitter: J. Patrick			
Accession No.:		Identifier: D. Sawday			
Document Ref: curdworth1.docx		Date of Identification: 12.07.16			
Material: pot & misc		Method of Recovery: evaluation trenching			
Site Type: village		Job Number: 16-204			
Context	Ware	Fabric	Nos	Gr	Comments
POT					
2 [1]	Sandy quartz tempered wares – handmade/?wheel finished	SQ	7	169	12th – 14th C. Includes two jar rims and four co-joining body sherds. Some sherds abraded and/or sooted.
4 [3] E-W ditch	Sandy quartz tempered wares - handmade	SQ	1	20	12th – 14th C. externally sooted and abraded
8 [7]	Sandy quartz tempered wares - handmade	SQ	2	16	12th – 14th C., one externally sooted

The presence of co-joining sherds, the relative lack of abrasion and the average sherd weight of 20.5 grams pottery suggests, despite the small size of the assemblage, the survival of relatively undisturbed archaeological levels in the vicinity.

The charred plant remains - *Rachel Small*

This report presents the study of the charred plant remains recovered during trial trenching at Curdworth, Warwickshire. The evaluation revealed the remains of a Medieval Burbage plot: a boundary ditch [03], post hole [05], and rubbish pit [01]. Two samples were taken, sample one was from the fill of rubbish pit (02) and sample two from the fill of the boundary ditch (04), both fills contained medieval pottery. The recovery and study of plant remains, which may include cereal grains, chaff, and weed seeds, provides important evidence for past food production, consumption, agricultural practices and environment.

Method

One part of each sample, approximately 10 litres, 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 below 4mm were scanned for artefacts and the abundances of the remains were recorded. Plant remains were identified by comparison to modern reference material available at ULAS and names follow Stace (1991). Complete grains were counted as one and fragments which included the embryo. Following Van der Veen (1992, 25), each rachis internode and weed seed fragment was counted as one (Table 1).

Results

Sample 1 was from the rubbish pit (2) [01]. Modern rootlets were present but in a small quantity suggesting the effects of bioturbation were minimal. Charcoal fragments were common. Charred plant remains included indeterminate cereal grains; large grass (Poaceae) and stinking mayweed seeds (*Anthemis cotula L.*), the latter is a weed which is common on arable and disturbed lands.

Sample 2 (4) [03] also contained modern rootlets and charcoal in similar quantities to sample 1 but contained a larger number of charred plant remains. Cereal grains were present and included: bread wheat type (*Triticum aestivum/turgidum L.*), rye (*Secale cereale L.*); and possibly oat (*Avena spp.*) (it is not possible to distinguish between wild and cultivated grains). A bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum L.*) rachis internode was present. Seeds including large grass and vetch (*Vicia spp.*) were identified, the latter is a common agricultural weed but also makes for good animal fodder.

Discussion

In the samples cereal grains were most common with smaller amounts of chaff and weed seeds. Bread wheat and rye were identified and possibly oat. The remains represent waste from food preparation and consumption, probably spills from cooking foods such as pottage that burnt on a hearth. This material was then dumped into site features including the boundary ditch and pit. The findings are similar to other sites in the county such as Vicarage Gardens, Dunchurch (Monckton 2013).

Conclusion

The archaeological features found suggest the remains of a medieval burgage plot possibly fronting onto Farthing lane. Ditch [03] is probably part of the boundary. The single truncated post hole [05] may suggest the potential for buildings although no other structural remains found. Pit [01] contained 12th- 14th century pottery with large amounts of seeds indicating a possible rubbish pit.

The boundary ditch is comparable to those found in recent fieldwork at Appleby Magna, Leicestershire where burgage plot ditches were recorded fronting onto Measham road (Jarvis 2014, Patrick 2016). The medieval pottery recovered suggest these features could be contemporary structures possibly associated with the manor house just to the east of the site.

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Mr M. Jones for his co-operation with this project. Also thanks to Planters for supplying the driver and excavator. The project was managed by Vicki Score and the fieldwork was carried out by the author also of ULAS.

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	Farthing Lane, Curdworth
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	Vicki Score
Project Supervisor	JPatrick
Previous/Future work	Evaluation
Current Land Use	Paddock
Development Type	New House
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Requirement
Site Co ordinates	SP 1815 2940
Start/end dates of field work	2016
Archive Recipient	Warwickshire Museums
Study Area	0.05ha

Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Warwickshire Museums with accession number WM_T1556.

The archive consists of the following:

- 1 Trench recording sheet
- 10 Context Sheets
- 1 Photo Record sheet
- 1 Unbound copy of this report
- 2 Contact sheet of digital photographs
- 1 CD digital photographs

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