



UNIVERSITY OF
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Archaeological Services

**An archaeological Strip, Map, &
Sample with Watching Brief on Land
North of Fircone, Farthing Lane,
Curdworth,
Warwickshire
(SP 1815 2940)**

James Patrick



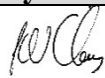
ULAS Report No 2017- 29
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for

Mr J.Holmes

| Filename/Version | Checked by | Date |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------|
| 2017-029 | Patrick Clay  | 21/03/2017 |
| | | |

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Accession Number: WM-T1556

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Fircone, Farthing Lane, Curdworth, Warwickshire.
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Summary

An archaeological strip, map, and sample with a watching brief was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land North of Fircone, Farthing Lane, Curdworth, Warwickshire (SP 1815 2940).

The work undertaken as mitigation in advance of the construction of a single detached house with associated ground-works. Previous work had shown that the area lies close to a moated site at Curdworth Hall Farm on the east side of Curdworth (MWA43) directly to the east of the development site. The moat is reputed to mark the site of the former manor house (MWA6227). The evaluation showed archaeological remains in the form of a medieval plot boundary ditch and a contemporary rubbish pit. The strip, map, and sample revealed the further continuation of the east to west ditch across the width of the buildings footprint. Further slots through the plot boundary ditch contained more medieval pottery. No other archaeological features were revealed.

The watching brief on associated service trenches and removal of the topsoil for the driveway and parking area were also negative with no archaeological remains identified.

The archive for this work will be deposited with Warwickshire Museums with accession number WM-T1556.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Mr J. Holmes to carry out an archaeological strip, map, sample with watching brief on land North of Fircone, Farthing Lane, Curdworth, Warwickshire (SP 1815 2940). 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/2016/0645).

Archaeological trial trenching had identified a medieval boundary plot and rubbish pit and Warwickshire County Council in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the planning authority requested a strip, map and sample excavation.

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.

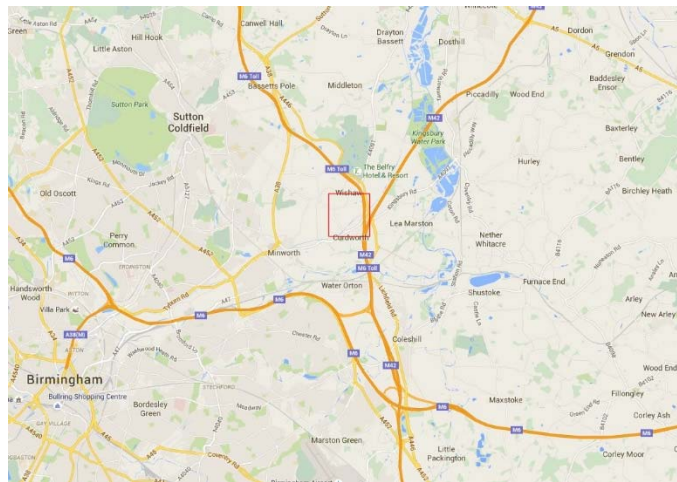


Figure 1: General Site Location

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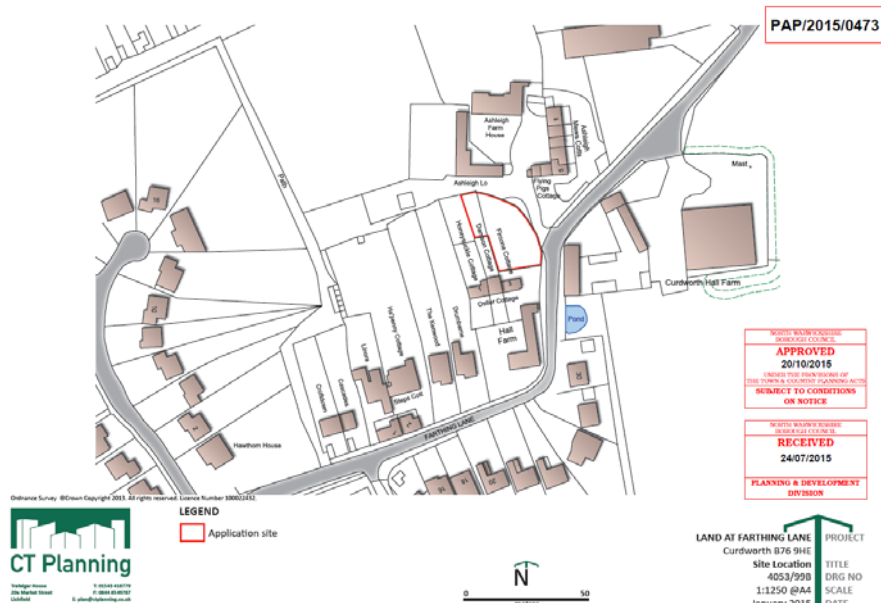


Figure 2: Site location within Curdworth (Plan provided by Client)

Archaeological and Historical Background

The site lies within on the north-east edge of the medieval settlement core of Curdworth (**MWA 9590**). The medieval settlement of Curdworth (**MWA9590**) was first recorded by Creoda, King of Mercia between 586-593. The name 'Curdworth' means 'Creoda's Clearing' and later mentioned in the Domesday Survey. At the time of the Domesday, Curdworth lay in the Coleshill Hundred and comprised about 480 acres of arable land, 16 acres of meadow and some woodland held by Thorkill of Warwick (Fig. 3).

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, reputed to mark the site of the former manor house (**MWA6227**). 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.

Archaeological evaluation during 2016 consisted of a single evaluation trench which showed remains of a medieval plot boundary ditch, associated with a medieval rubbish pit, and a single post hole. The pottery dated the features from the 12th to 14th century representing remains of a possible Burbage plot fronting Farthing Lane.

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.

Local knowledge, and information from the surveyors land report records the sites use as a Pig Farm, as indicated by Flying Pigs Cottage directly north-east of the site and later as a scrap yard during the 1950's. A shorter second trench was abandoned due the close proximity to an Ash tree.

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work are:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits and provide further clarification of the nature and extent of surviving archaeological remains on the site.
- To characterise more fully the extent, date range and significance of any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To excavate and record significant archaeological deposits whose future integrity may be compromised by groundworks associated with the proposed construction works.
- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape and to advance understanding of the heritage assets.
- To recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results
- To produce an archive and report of the results.

Within the stated project aims, the principal objective of the recording is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context.

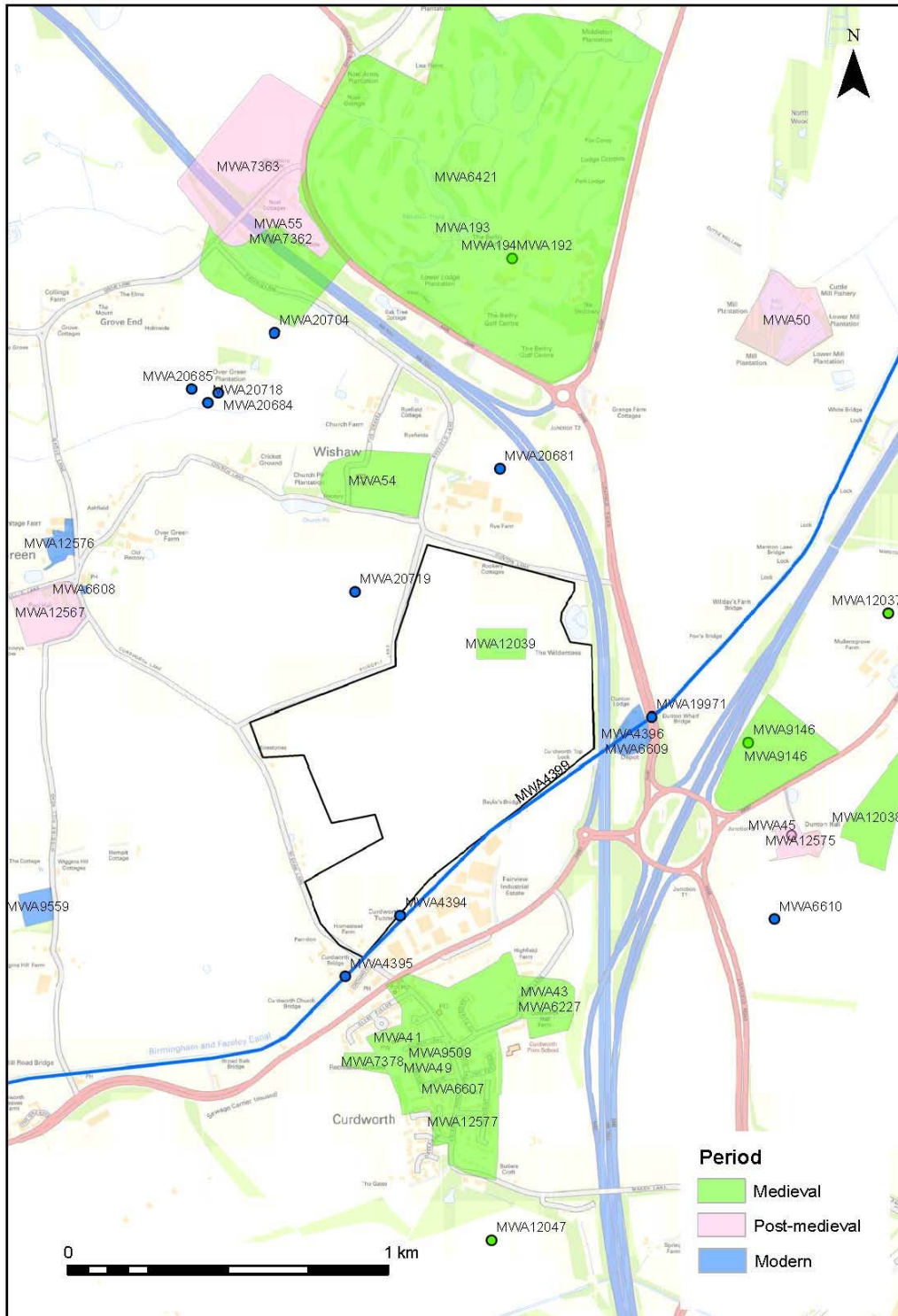


Figure 3: Plan showing Medieval and later sites in surrounding area

Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) and was in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014). The archaeological work followed the approved *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological work* (WSI) prepared by ULAS (2017).

The work required a strip, map, and sample excavation of the footprint of the building and a watching brief during associated ground-works including the driveway, car parking area, and service trenches. This equated to a total of 0.05 hectares (Fig. 4).

The ground-works were undertaken using a rubber tracked mini- digger with a 1.0m ditch bucket.



Figure 4: The dwellings footprint (strip, map, & sample area Blue) and driveway, parking areas, & services (watching Brief area Green).

Results

The topsoil and subsoil were excavated separately under archaeological supervision. Topsoil across the site was approximately 0.40m deep consisting of a dark greyish-brown friable loam with small frequent rounded pebbles, coal flecks with fragments of modern pottery and metal work probably associated with recent landscaping.

The subsoil consisted of a light yellowish-brown friable loam with occasional small rounded pebbles and coal flecks. The average depth of the subsoil was approximately 0.25m deep and overlay a yellow silty-sand. Areas of red clay with iron-stone was also present in places (Fig. 5).



Figure 5: Excavating along building footprint, looking south-east

At the southern end of the excavation area the medieval plot boundary ditch as revealed by the previous evaluation was shown to continue across the footprint of the building.

The ditch [08] was reasonably well defined, cutting through the subsoil but truncated. It had an average width of 1m and ran east – west for over 7m along the length of the building footprint (Figs 6-7). Two slots were excavated; one either side of the area excavated in the evaluation trench with a view to recover more pottery. The sides were of a moderate to steep gradient with an average depth of 0.45 m onto a concaved base. Two fills were identified with (010) representing the upper fill consisting of a mid-yellowish grey fine sandy silt with frequent small rounded pebbles with a thickness of 0.24. Two sherds of medieval pottery was recovered. The primary fill (09) consisted of redeposited natural possibility formed by slippage and silting from the sides. The

deposit consisted of a light yellowish-brown fine silty sand with occasional small rounded pebbles (Figs 8-9).



Figure 6: Medieval plot boundary ditch across building footprint looking east.

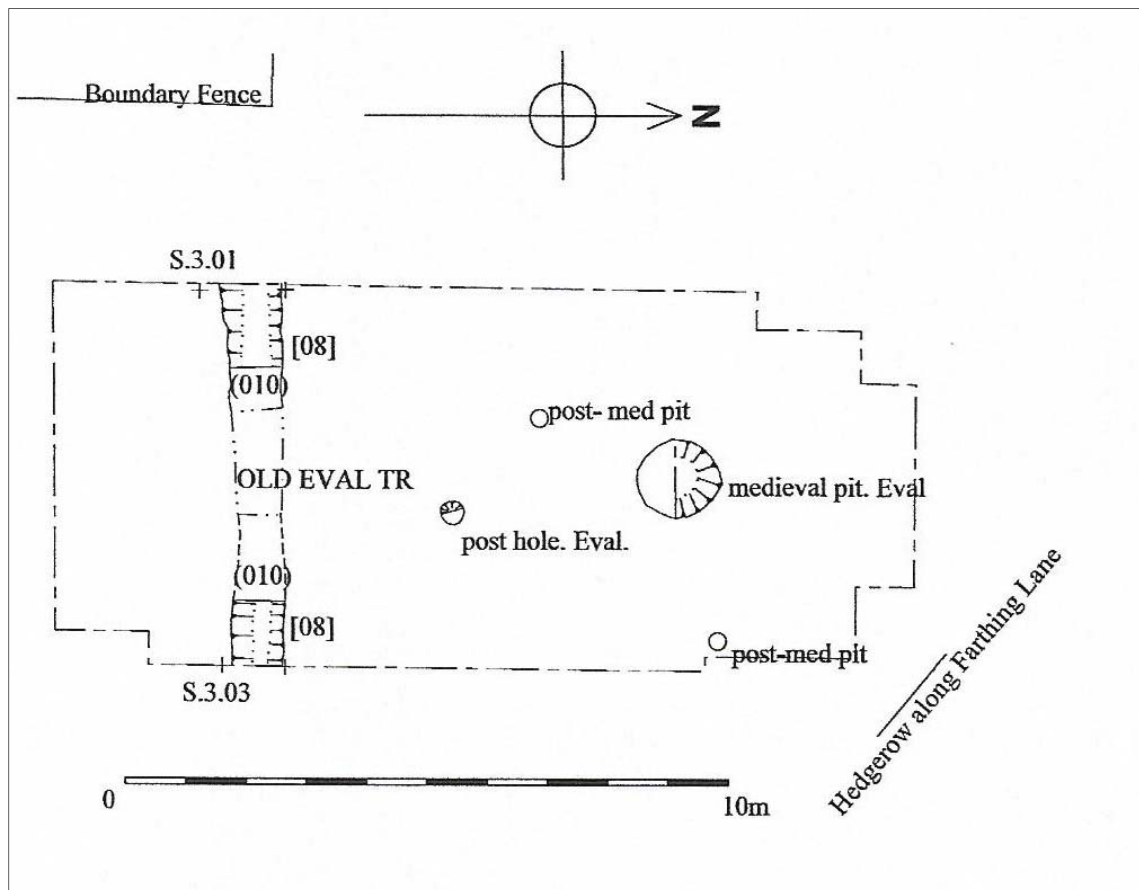


Figure 7: The medieval plot boundary ditch within the new buildings footprint
Contexts: [08] (09), & (010), continuing from previous evaluation.



Figure 8: Medieval plot boundary ditch [08]. Looking west

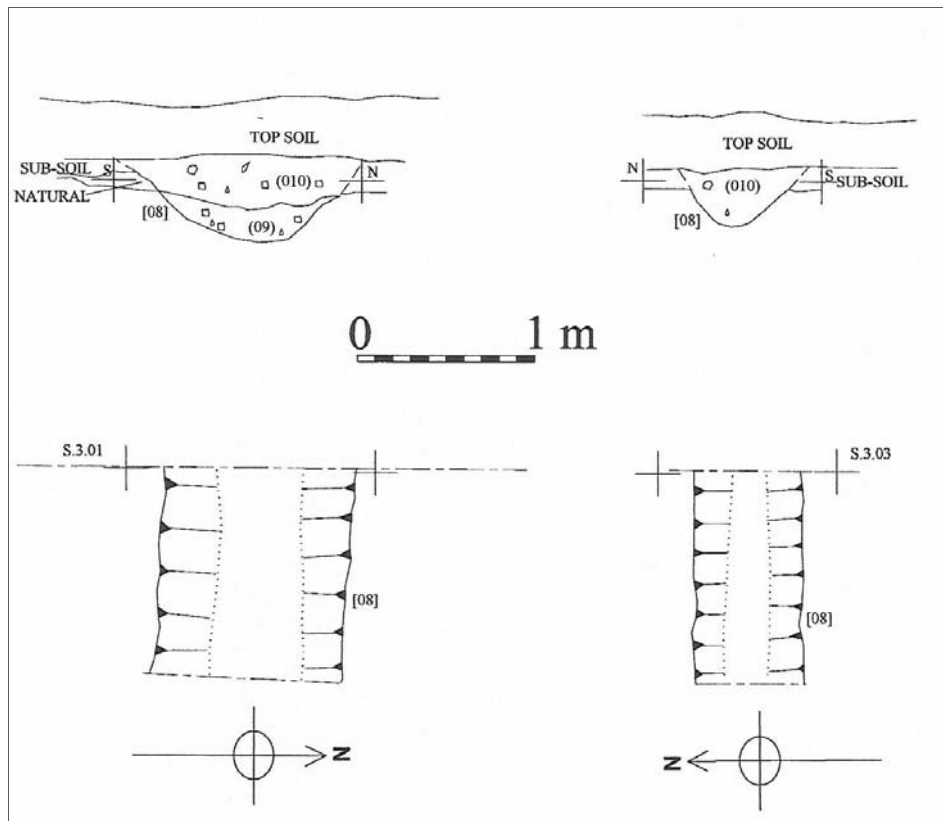


Figure 9: Showing sections and plans of medieval plot boundary ditch

Despite the previous evaluation trench revealing a medieval rubbish pit and post hole, no other features of medieval or earlier date were revealed. Two modern pits (20th century) were located which on appearance were initially thought to be more medieval waste pits. However sample excavation of both pits showed concentrations of recent pig bones associated with the former 20th century pig farm (Figs 7 and 10).



Figure 10: Excavated pit containing modern pig bones

Archaeological supervision during the watching brief covering both the car park and driveway as well as the service trenches did not reveal any archaeological remains. Only a limited depth (approximately 0.30m) of overburden was removed consisted of just topsoil. Geotextile membrane matting and hard-core was then used over for the driveway and car park fronting onto Farthing Lane. This was approximately 0.20- 030m above the visible archaeological horizon observed within the buildings footprint. No further overburden will be removed. A soak-away was excavated just to the north-west of building footprint (Fig. 11). This measured 1.20m square and was excavated down to through the natural substrata. No archaeological features were identified. A second soakaway of the same dimensions with a 0.60m wide service trench was attempted just to the south-east corner of the footprint onto compact red clay. No features were identified although a Horseshoe-type ceramic field drain was identified. The clay geology in the proposed soak-away was considered too hard and compact and the trench was therefore abandoned in favour of a present manhole to the north was backfilled.



Figure 11: Excavation of the soakaway

THE POST ROMAN CERAMIC FINDS - Deborah Sawday

The pottery assemblage is made up of two sherds, weighing 40g, representing a maximum count of two vessels and a vessel rim equivalent of 0.105 (calculated by adding together the circumference of the surviving rim sherds, where one vessel equals 1.00).

Condition

The condition of the one sherd is good, the other is somewhat abraded, but taken together the average sherd weight is twenty grams

Methodology

The material was examined under an x20 binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to current guidelines (MPRG 1998, MPRG 2016) and the Warwickshire pottery fabric series (Soden and Ratkai 1998). The results are shown below (table 1).

Discussion

The surface and margins of the jar are dark or very dark grey with pale buff inner margins and a grey core. The sparse ill-sorted small to moderate sized inclusions are predominantly quartz, with a scatter of mica visible on both the inner and outer surfaces. The sherd appears to be hand-made, but with clear evidence on the interior of having been finished on a turntable. The other sherd is in a similar fabric, but with a buff inner surface.

Conclusion

The sherds appear to lie within the RS group in the Warwickshire fabric series, - fabric RS03 perhaps offering the closest parallel in terms of manufacture, date and vessel form, if not fabric - which is probably fairly local in origin - (Soden and Ratkai 1998, 28, fig.1).

The pottery was recovered from the back-fill of a medieval plot boundary ditch. It is dated typologically to the 12th century and, with a not insignificant average sherd weight, offers evidence of archaeological activity in the vicinity.

Table 1: The pottery by context, fabric/ware, sherd number, weight (grams), EVES and vessel class where known.

| Context | Fabric/ware | No | Gr | EVEs | Max Vessel No | Comments |
|---------|---------------------------|----|----|-------|---------------|--|
| 10 [8] | RS01-09 - Sandy Grey ware | 1 | 36 | 0.105 | 1 | Simple flat topped and slightly everted jar rim diameter c.170mm, hand-made, wheel finished? |
| 10 [8] | RS01-09 - Sandy Grey ware | 1 | 4 | | 1 | Body sherd, similar to the above. |

Conclusion

The archaeological features found appear to be the remains of a medieval burgage plot as originally indicated by the previous evaluation trench. This is in the form of a boundary ditch running east-west across the present building footprint limit. The ditch seems to be orientated with the present east to west boundary fence (marked in black on Fig. 4). It is possible that this boundary continues east to west across the present back gardens of Damson and Honeysuckle cottages to the west. A possible parallel east to west boundary to the south continues also at a right angle from Farthing Lane and Hall Farm with Ostler Cottage to the north and the current boundaries could represent continuity of medieval burgage plots. It is assumed that the boundary continued east but the excavations of the car parking area were not deep enough to expose the ditch.

This plot boundary ditch may continue to Farthing lane, although the existence of the protected Ash tree prevents confirmation of this. The presence of a former Pig Farm (from local knowledge) has been confirmed by the presence of two pits with modern pig bone. The topsoil was also disturbed / landscaped in placed with some scrap metal fragments found from the former scrap yard in the 1950's.

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Mr J. Holmes for his co-operation with this project. 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 | Strip, map and sample +WB |
| 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 | 2017 |
| Archive Recipient | Warwickshire Museums |
| Study Area | 0.05ha |

Archive

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

The archive consists of the following:

- 2 Context Sheets
- 1 watching brief form
- 1 Standard photo record sheet
- 1 Unbound copy of this report
- 2 Contact sheets of standard digital photographs
- 1 CD digital photographs

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