



**An Archaeological Evaluation  
On Land at Starmore Farm,  
Swinford  
Leicestershire  
NGR: SP 56970 79250**

Naomi Cooper



ULAS Report No 2018-018

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For: Starmore Farm

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# **An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Starmore Farm, Swinford, Leicestershire**

Naomi Cooper

## **Summary**

*University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of Starmore Farm from the 8th to 10th January 2018 on behalf of Starmore Farm. Five trenches, totalling 160m<sup>2</sup>, a 4.1% sample of the site, were excavated to evaluate a field next to Starmore Farm, where it is proposed to construct two new dwellings (Planning Ref: 16/01804/FUL).*

*The Archaeological evaluation recorded a ditch of probable post-medieval date in Trench 5. Trenches 1 and 2 had modern disturbance and all trenches were subject to flooding due to high water levels in the area. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum collections under the accession number X.A6.2018.*

## **Introduction**

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out on land at Starmore Farm, Swinford (SP 56970 79250) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (Section 12 Enhancing and conserving the Historic Environment). Planning permission is being sought for the erection of 2 dwellings (Planning ref 16/01804/FUL; Fig. 2).

The programme of archaeological work comprising trial trenching was carried out by ULAS on behalf of the client and was undertaken in order to determine the presence, character and extent of any archaeological remains within proposed development area in order to formulate a mitigation strategy for any archaeology identified.

## **Site Description, Topography and Geology**

Swinford lies to the south-east of Lutterworth close to the junction of the M1, M6 and A14 (Fig. 1). The farm is located on the southern side of the village of Swinford, on the western side of Stanford Road. The proposed development is for the erection of two dwellings on land to the rear of the farm and associated infrastructure and roads (Fig. 2). The Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire required a programme of archaeological work comprising trial trenching to determine the impact of the proposed scheme on any buried archaeology in order to produce a mitigation strategy for the site.

The land is currently a grassed field between farm buildings and is currently vacant with ponds and overgrown areas (Fig. 3). To the north of the site is the barns and houses of Starmore Farm and to the east is one of the main roads, Stanford Road, leading out of the village. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, indicates that the underlying geology of the site is Charmouth mudstone formation, overlain with Diamicton till deposits and the land lies at approximately 115m aOD.



Figure 1: Location Map of Starmore Farm, Swinford.  
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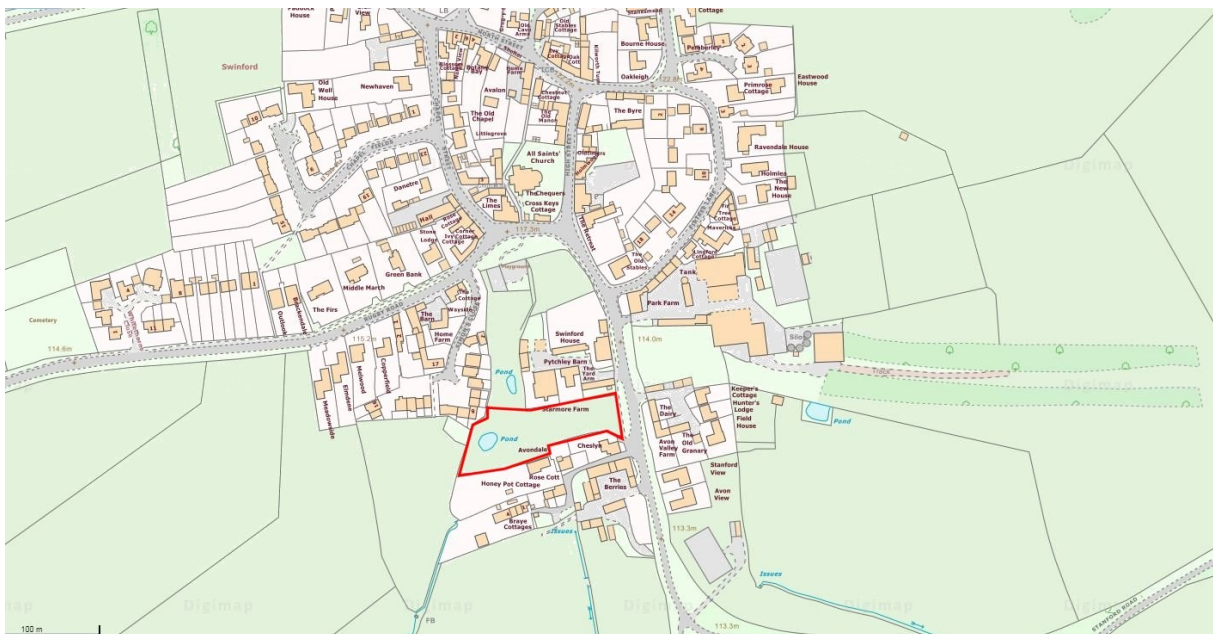


Figure 2. Proposed development (Provided by Client)



a. South side of site (Facing South)



b. West side of site (Facing Southwest)



c. North West side of site (Facing North West)



d. North East side of site (Facing Southwest)

Figure 3: Pre Excavation Shots

## Historical and Archaeological Background

The village of Swinford was known as *Suineford* in the Domesday Book (Bourne 2003, 84) and consists of a historic village core with four main roads that lead off this centre, (HER **MLE10318**). The main conservation area in Swinford is made up of cottages and former farm houses and farm land. The farm lies on the south edge of the historic village core and the surrounding fields have evidence for ridge and furrow.

## Aims and Objectives

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation involving the excavation of exploratory trenches to ascertain the presence, condition and date of any archaeological remains which may be present.

The main objectives of the archaeological work 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 record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape.
- To recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project aims, the principal objective was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context in order to formulate a mitigation strategy to address the impacts of the proposed development on cultural heritage.

## **Draft Research Themes**

The evaluation was designed taking into consideration the *East Midlands Research Framework* (Cooper 2006), and the updated *Research Agenda and Strategy* (Knight *et al.* 2012). Although there is the low potential for the site the following specific research topics have been identified:

- Research Objective 6C - Review the evidence for developing settlement hierarchies;
- Research Objective 7E- Investigate the morphology of rural settlements;
- Research Objective 7I- Investigate the development of the open-field system and medieval woodland management

## **Methodology**

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

A total of five 20m by 1.6m trenches were excavated across the area. These were positioned evenly across the site although ecological constraints (the presence of newts within the pond) required these to be modified (Figure 4).

The topsoil and overlying layers were removed in level spits under continuous archaeological supervision to the uppermost level of significant archaeological deposits, the natural substratum, or to a maximum safe working depth, depending on which was reached first. Trenches were excavated using a JCB with a 1.6m wide ditching bucket.

All trenches, exposed sections and spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. Archaeological features were hand cleaned, photographed and sample excavated as appropriate to address the objectives of the evaluation. Field notes were recorded on pro-forma ULAS trench recording forms whilst all excavated stratigraphic units were given a unique context number and recorded on pro-forma ULAS context sheets. Measured drawings (plans and sections) of all archaeological features were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and were attached to the overall site plan, which will be tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

A photographic record of the excavation was prepared, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. Colour digital photographs were taken throughout the evaluation. The photographic record also included ‘working shots’ to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

Trenches were located using a Topcon hiperV GPS system. The trenches were recorded and then backfilled at the end of the evaluation.

## **Results**

Five trenches were excavated in the proposed development areas (Fig. 5). The topsoil throughout the site was a mid-dark brown-grey clayey silt between 0.1 – 0.38m in depth overlying a light yellow-brown clay subsoil between 0.2 – 0.5m deep.

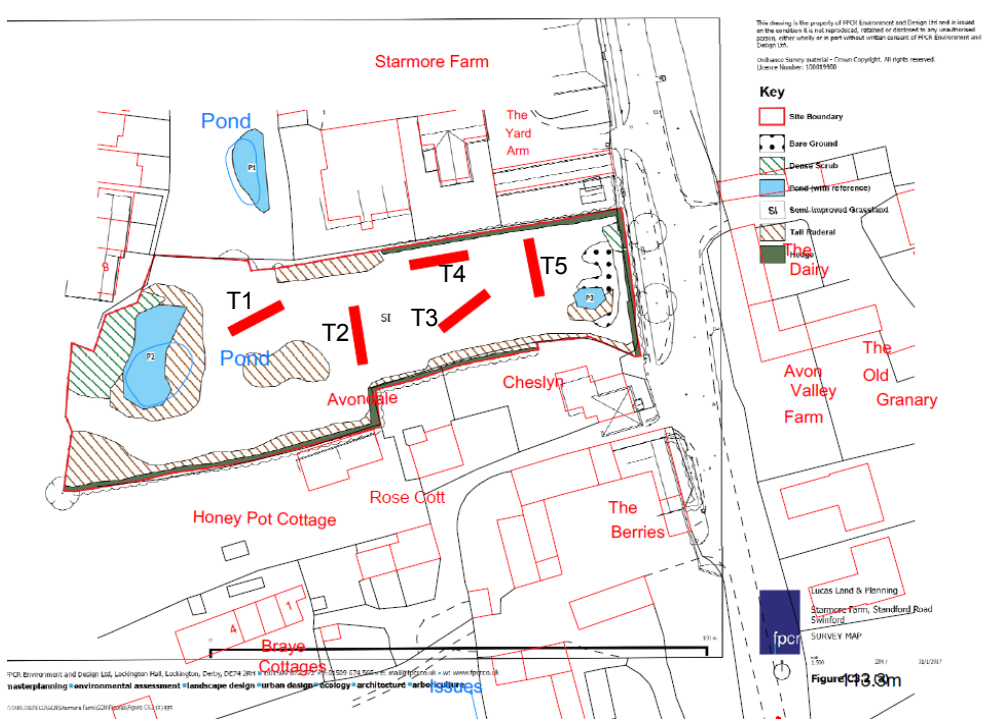


Figure 4: Trench plan overlain on the ecological constraints map.

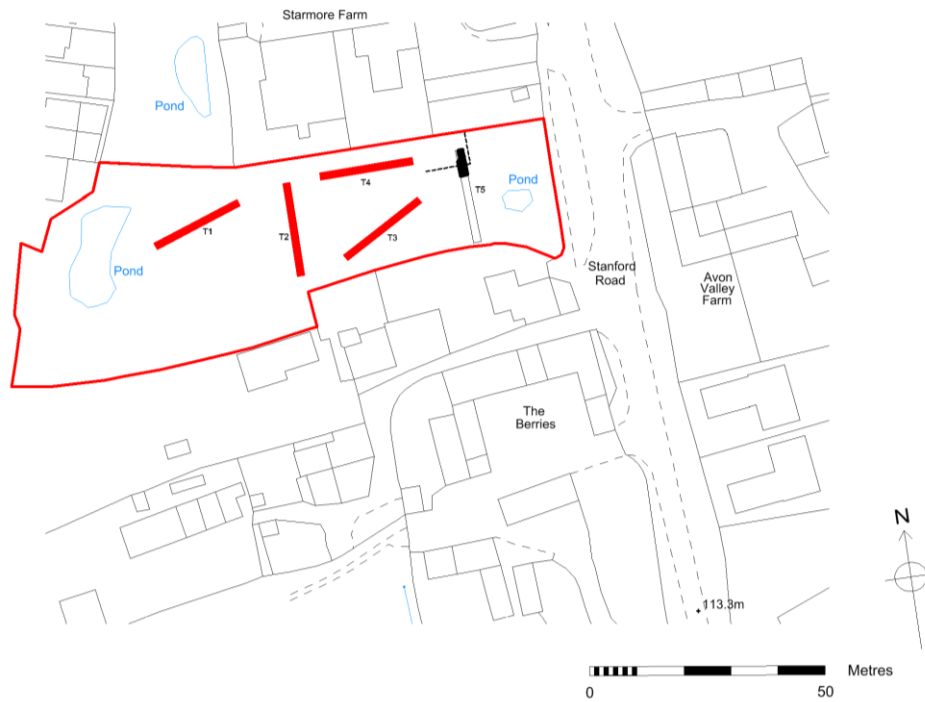


Figure 5: Area of excavation, Surveyed trench locations showing archaeology present



**Trench 1**

Trench 1 was located on the western edge of the assessment area. The trench was truncated by two large pits filled with modern rubble from the farm cutting through the topsoil and the mid-light brownish yellow clay subsoil with occasional gravel (Fig.).

Table 1. Summary of Trench 1 dimensions

Trench 1					
Alignment	SW - NE				
Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	
20	1.6	32	0.96	1.24	
Interval from SW	0m	5m	10m	15m	To NE end 20m
Topsoil depth	0.21	0.10	0.31	0.38	N/A
Subsoil depth	0.81	Modern Disturbance	0.65	0.46	N/A
Top of Natural substratum	1.02	N/A	0.96	0.84	N/A
Base of trench	1.02	1.24	0.96	0.84	1.13



Figure 6: North-east facing view of Trench 1 (Scale 1.00m) Modern pit is visible in the foreground.

### Trench 2

Trench 2 was positioned across the assessment area at a right angle to the field boundaries, running north to south with a slight slope towards the south. No archaeology was identified although a number of land drains were seen running across the trench (Fig. 7).

Table 2. Summary of Trench 2 dimensions

Trench 2					
Alignment	N - S				
Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	
19.30	1.6	30.88	0.74	1.08	
Interval from N	0m	5m	10m	15m	To S end 20m
Topsoil depth	0.18		0.29	0.32	0.28
Subsoil depth	0.69		0.79	0.61	0.46
Top of Natural substratum	Not Seen	Not Seen	1.08	0.93	0.74
Base of trench	0.87	0.78	1.08	0.93	0.74



Figure 7: South facing view of Trench 2 with drain in foreground (Scale 1.00m)

### Trench 3

Trench 3 was located to the east of Trench 2 and oriented north-east to south-west. No archaeology was identified although again evidence for several land drains was identified (Fig. 9).

Table 3. Summary of Trench 3 dimensions

Trench 3					
Alignment	SW - NE				
Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	
19.70	1.6	31.52	0.58	0.90	
Interval from N	0m	5m	10m	15m	To S end 20m
Topsoil depth	0.11	0.26	0.33	0.18	0.25
Subsoil depth	0.38	0.32	0.57	0.41	0.53
Top of Natural substratum	N/A	N/A	0.90	0.59	0.78
Base of trench	0.49	0.58	0.90	0.59	0.78



Figure 8: North-east facing view of Trench 3 (Scale 1.00m)

### **Trench 4**

Trench 4 was positioned parallel to the north edge of the assessment area running from east to west. Potential evidence for ploughing was seen in the form of widely spaced furrows approximately 6-7m apart. Modern drains were also visible (Fig. 9).

Table 4. Summary of Trench 4 dimensions

<b>Trench 4</b>					
<b>Alignment</b>	E - W				
<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Area (m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Min. depth (m)</b>	<b>Max. depth (m)</b>	
20.05	1.6	32.08	0.64	0.76	
Interval from E	<b>0m</b>	<b>5m</b>	<b>10m</b>	<b>15m</b>	To W end <b>20m</b>
Topsoil depth	0.26	0.29	0.32	0.29	0.28
Subsoil depth	0.42	0.38	0.44	0.45	0.36
Top of Natural substratum	0.68	0.67	N/A	0.74	0.64
Base of trench	0.68	0.67	0.76	0.74	0.64



Figure 9: West facing view of Trench 4 (Scales 1.00m)

### **Trench 5**

Trench 5 lay at the east end of the site closest to the road. Within the trench two possible ditches were seen cutting into the mid-light brownish-yellow natural clay.

One lay at the northern end of the trench with another possible ditch was visible at the southern end running roughly east to west. Due to high water levels and flooding in the trenches, the southern end of the trench could not be investigated further and was backfilled. Two pieces of brick were found on the surface of the southern ditch and it seems likely that this is a post-medieval boundary ditch.

A slot was excavated in the northern ditch although this also flooded and only the upper levels were able to be excavated (Figs 10-12). The ditch was orientated approximately east to west with a second ditch running northwards from it. The excavated section was about 3m wide, and the fill was a dark brown silty clay. Within the excavated section two fragments of bone from a large mammal and a single sherd of post medieval pottery were recovered.

Trench 5					
Alignment	N - S				
Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	
20.20	1.6	32.32	0.53	0.78	
Interval from N	0m	5m	10m	15m	To S end 20m
Topsoil depth	0.14	0.29	0.23	0.28	0.17
Subsoil depth	0.44	0.49	0.30	0.45	0.38
Top of Natural substratum	-	0.78	0.53	0.73	0.55
Base of trench	0.58	0.78	0.53	0.73	0.55

Table 5. Summary of Trench 5 dimensions

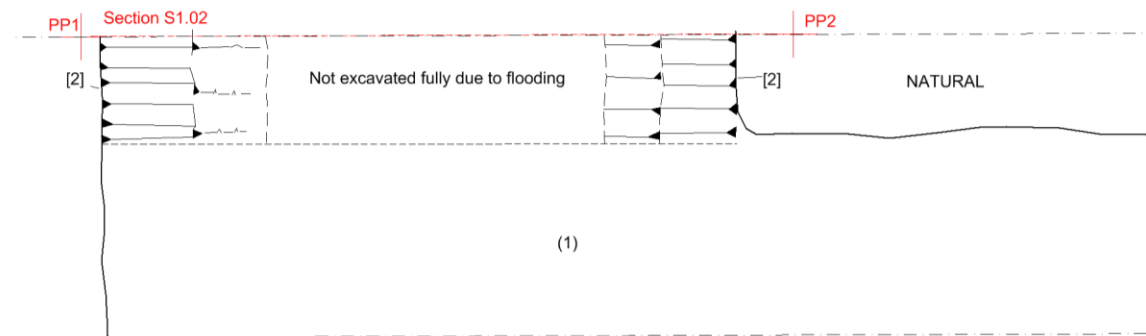


Figure 10: South facing view of trench 5 (Scale 1.00m)



Figure 11: East facing section of ditch [2], partially excavated.

Plan of Ditch [2] in the North end of T5



East facing section of Ditch [2] in the North end of T5

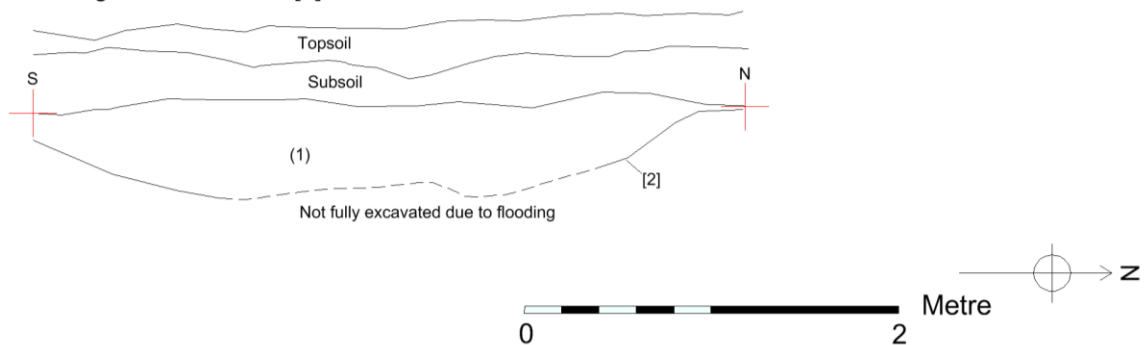


Figure 12: Plan and Section of Ditch [2] in the end of Trench 5

**Conclusion**

The evaluation trenches at Starmore farm produced little evidence for archaeology in the western side of the area (Trenches 1 – 4). The modern pits in trench 1 and the presents of ponds in the general area suggests that this area has been landscaped in recent times.

The ditches identified in trench 5 area relatively large and are likely to represent boundary ditches. No subdivision of the field are visible on the 1886 OS map (Figure 13). The only pottery from the ditch is early post-medieval, so the ditches are likely to be post-medieval, but pre-dating the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

There was no evidence for earlier buildings fronting onto Stanford Road and the surrounding fields contain ridge and furrow. The current field boundaries are fairly irregular and could represent a modern pattern. The ditches in Trench 5 could suggest that this field was once sub-divided into smaller plots perhaps associated with the building of the farms along Stanford Road. Given the location of the site on the southern edge of the village, the field may have been part of the field system in the medieval period.

## Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A6.2018 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report
- 5 Trench recording sheets
- 1 Photo Record sheet
- 1 Contact sheet of digital photographs
- 1 Drawing index
- 1 Drawing record
- 1 A3 permatrace drawing sheet
- 1 CD digital photographs
- 1 Context list
- 2 Context Sheets

## Publication

A summary report will be submitted to the regional journal *Leicestershire Archaeology*.

University of Leicester Archaeological Services supports the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. The online OASIS form (Appendix 1) shall be completed detailing the results of the evaluation and once the report has become a public document following is incorporation into the Historic Environment Record it shall be placed on the website.

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork has been carried out by Mireya González Rodríguez and Naomi Cooper. It was managed by Vicki Score. Thanks to the on site ecologist for their help in position the trenches.

## Bibliography

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## Appendix 1: OASIS data entry

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1- 307560		
	<b>Project Name</b>	Archaeological Evaluation on Land at rear of Starmore Farm, Swinford, Leicestershire		
	<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	08/01/2018 – 10/01/2018		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	No/ Not Known		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Evaluation		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Sheep Grazing		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	Medieval Ditch		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	Medieval Pottery		
	<b>Development Type</b>	Residential		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Approved		
<b>Planning Ref.</b>	16/01804/FUL			
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Pytchley Barn (Starmore Farm), Stanford Road, Swinford, LE17 6BJ		
	<b>Study Area</b>	3823 m <sup>2</sup>		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SP56970 79250		
	<b>Height OD</b>	113		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	University of Leicester Archaeological Services		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Local Planning Authority (LCC)		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Vicki Score		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Mireya González Rodríguez		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Starmore Farm		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service
	<b>ID (Acc.No.)</b>	X.A6.2018	X.A6.2018	X.A6.2018
	<b>Contents</b>	1 x sherd pottery 2 x bone frags	Digital photos	Paper stratigraphic archive
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey literature (Unpublished)		
	<b>Title</b>	An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Starmore Farm, Swinford		
	<b>Author</b>	Cooper, N.		
	<b>Other bibliographic details</b>	ULAS Report No – 2018-018		
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