UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
Archaeological Services

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

NGR: SK 74111 21026

Nathan Flavell

ULAS Report No. 2017-182

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

Nathan Flavell

For: Mr Martin Brown & HSSP Architects

Planning Application: 17/00763/FUL

Filename/Version	Amended/Checked by	Date

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ULAS Report Number 2017-182

Accession Number X.A6.2016

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Nathan Flavell

Summary

Archaeological trial trenching was carried out at Hilltop Farm, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (SK 74111 21026) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 23-26 October 2017. The work was undertaken on behalf of Mr Martin Brown and HSSP Architects in advance of a new housing development. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the accession number X.A6.2016. Three Iron Age gullies and one undated ditch were encountered.

Introduction

This document constitutes the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out at Hilltop Farm, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (SK 74111 21026). The work was undertaken on behalf of Mr Martin Brown and HSSP Architects by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 23-26 October 2017.

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 (Fig. 1). The proposed development site is located in the field to the south-east of the complex of buildings that form Hilltop Farm (Fig. 2). 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.

In view of the positive geophysical survey and initial trial trenching results a c.2% sample of the development area not subject to trial trenching in 2016 was proposed, the equivalent of nine 20m by 1.6m trenches (c.256m²). The first phase of trial trenching (Clapton 2016) confirmed the presence of Iron Age deposits not associated with the SM being of a different date, alignment and form.

The work followed the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) as laid out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation* (Clay 2017).

Geology and Topography

The land is relatively flat with a gentle slope down towards the south and west and has an average height of between 115 and 120m aOD. The British Geological Survey website indicates that the bedrock is likely to be Charmouth Mudstone Formation overlain by Oadby Member Diamicton.

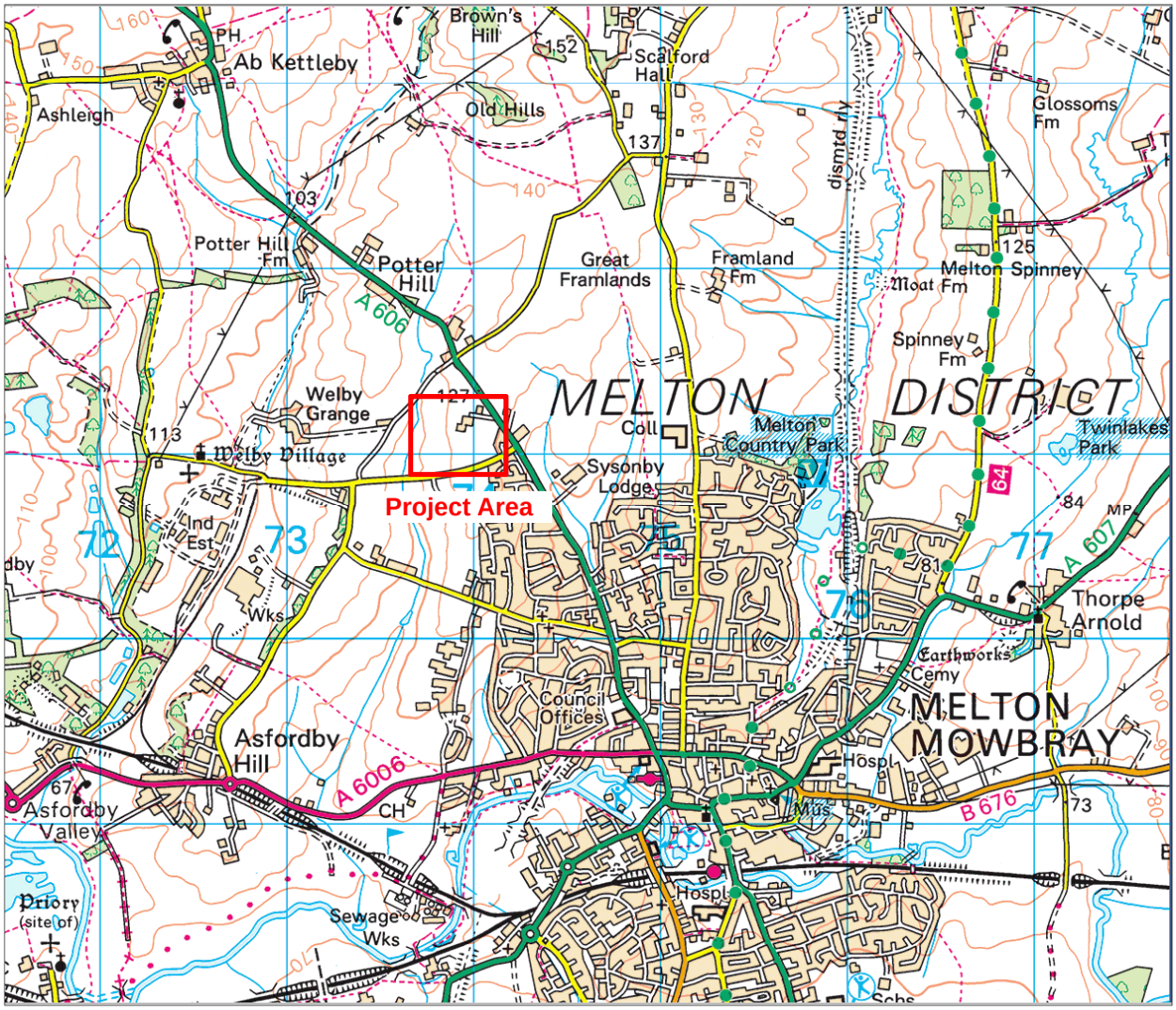

Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

Historical and Archaeological 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 Sysonby Grange Scheduled Monument. 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. A previous phase of trenching revealed linear features (ditches and gullies), with diagnostic sherds of pottery indicate a mid-late Iron Age date (Clapton 2016)

Archaeological Objectives

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 produce an archive and report of any results.

Methodology

This second phase of trenching continued the numbering system established previously in 2016. A total of nine 20-metre long trenches were to be excavated targeting other geophysical anomalies (Fig. 2).

The sections and existing spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. If present archaeological features were to be hand cleaned, planned, photographed and sample excavated as detailed in the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological field evaluations* (2014).

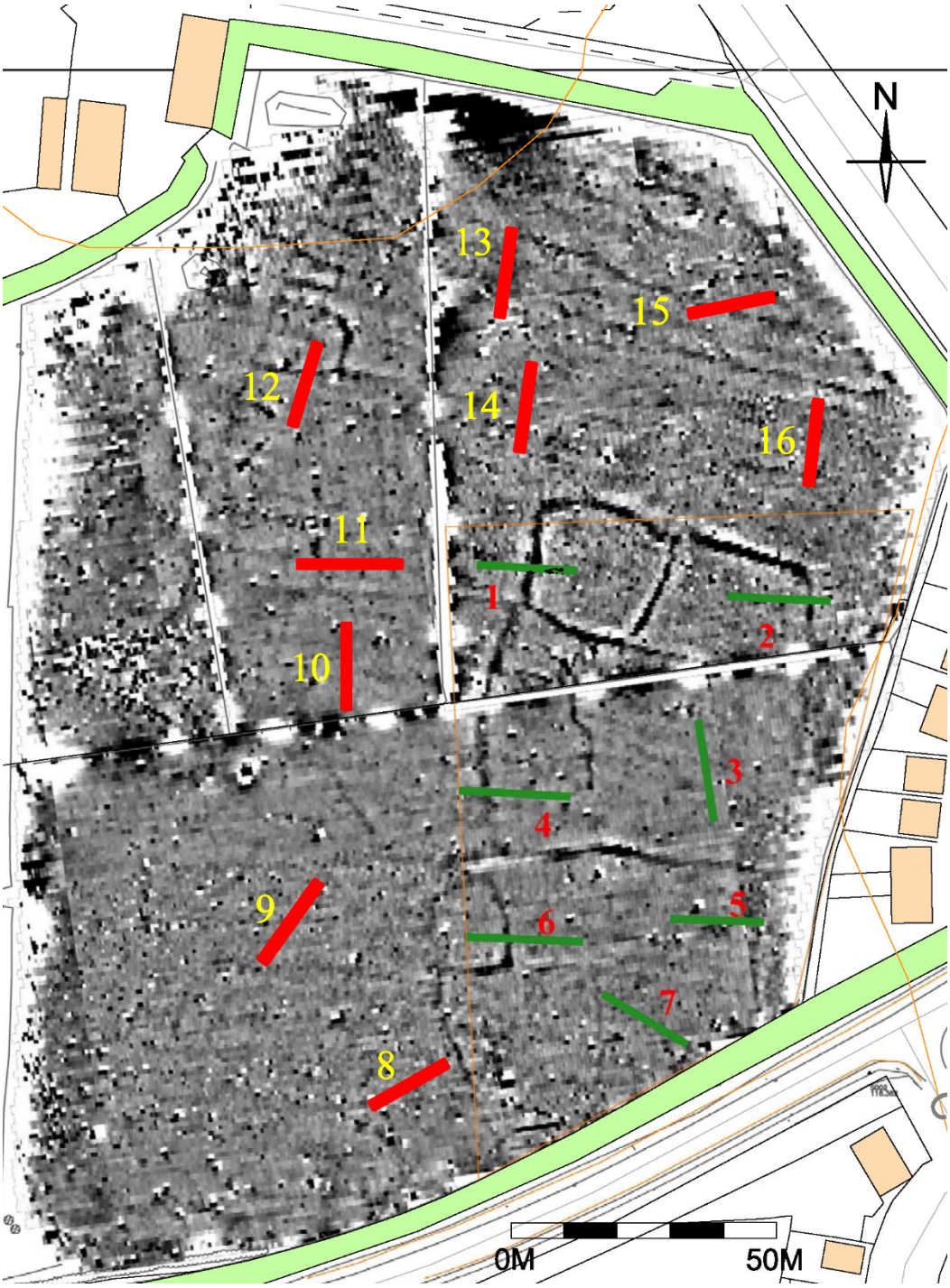

Figure 2: Trench plan with background geophysics

Results

Natural substrata varied between mottled grey, light brown clay with chalk inclusions mid brown sandy clay with chalk and stone inclusions across the field, between 0.38m and 0.8m below ground level. Subsoil was yellow-brown sandy clay between 0.19m to 0.5m thick. This was overlain by topsoil consisting of dark brown clay loam, 0.12 to 0.38m thick.

Trench 8

Trench 8 measured 20m x 1.5m, and was aligned east-west (Fig. 3). The natural substratum was encountered between 0.47m and 0.56m. Cut into the natural was a single unremarkable gully type feature [28], 0.48m wide, aligned northwest-southeast (Fig. 4). It was filled by brown-yellow sandy clay 0.17m deep, very similar to subsoil. The natural was overlain by subsoil, 0.19m-0.38m thick. This was overlain by topsoil, 0.18m-0.28m thick.

Trench No.	Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	Archaeology?
8	20	1.5	30	0.49	0.58	?

Interval (m) from east end	0	5	10	15	20				
Topsoil depth	0.28	0.22	0.28	0.18	0.2				
Subsoil depth	0.23	0.3	0.19	0.38	0.3				
Top of natural substratum	0.51	0.52	0.47	0.56	0.5				
Base of trench	0.51	0.52	0.49	0.58	0.52				

Figure 3: Trench 8 looking northeast

Figure 4: Gully [28] looking northwest

Trench 9

Trench 9 measured 22m x 1.5m aligned northeast to southwest. The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 0.46m and 0.65m. Cut into the natural were three linear features, all aligned northwest-southeast which were likely furrows. These were also filled buy the subsoil. The natural was overlain by subsoil, 0.2m-0.5m thick. This was overlain by topsoil, 0.12m-0.26m thick.

Trench No.	Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	Archaeology?
9	22	1.5	33	0.48	0.68	No

Interval (m) from southwest end	0	5	10	15	20	22			
Topsoil depth	0.26	0.2	0.12	0.23	0.25	0.2			
Subsoil depth	0.2	0.38	0.5	0.35	0.4	0.43			
Top of natural substratum	0.46	0.58	0.62	0.58	0.65	0.63			
Base of trench	0.48	0.58	0.62	0.6	0.68	0.64			

Trench 10

Trench 10 measured 19.5m x 1.5m aligned north to south. The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 0.47m and 0.58m. The natural was overlain by subsoil, 0.2m-0.28m thick. This was overlain by topsoil, 0.2m-0.28m thick.

Trench No.	Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	Archaeology?
10	19.5	1.5	29.25	0.48	0.58	No

Interval (m) from south end	0	5	10	15	19.5				
Topsoil depth	0.24	0.22	0.24	0.28	0.28				

Subsoil depth	0.28	0.25	0.26	0.2	0.2				
Top of natural substratum	0.52	0.47	0.5	0.58	0.48				
Base of trench	0.54	0.5	0.52	0.58	0.48				

Trench 11

Trench 11 measured 23.4m x 1.5m, and was aligned west-east (Fig. 5). The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 0.53m and 0.68m. Cut into this were two linear features at opposite ends of the trench. Ditch [37] was located at the west end of the trench, aligned north-south, with a v-shaped profile, 1.1m wide (Figs. 6 & 7). The primary fill (36) was grey clay with chalk inclusions, 0.14m thick. This was overlain by (35) mixed grey-orange silty clay with pebble and chalk inclusions, 0.19m thick. The final fill was (34) russet mottled silty clay with chalk flecks, 0.33m thick. Gully [39] was located at the east end of the trench aligned northwest-southeast, with a steep concave profile 0.3m wide (Figs. 8 & 9). It had a single fill (38), mottled brown-orange silty clay with chalk, flint and charcoal inclusions, 0.32m thick. These were sealed by subsoil, 0.2m-0.41m thick. This was overlain by topsoil, 0.22m-0.3m thick.

Trench No.	**Length (m)**	**Width (m)**	**Area (sq. m)**	**Min. depth (m)**	**Max. depth (m)**	**Archaeology?**
11	23.4	1.5	35.1	0.42	0.71	Yes

Interval (m) from west end	**0**	**5**	**10**	**15**	**20**	**23.4**			
Topsoil depth	0.22	0.23	0.26	0.27	0.3	0.28			
Subsoil depth	0.2	0.3	0.35	0.41	0.35	0.26			
Top of natural substratum	-	0.53	0.61	0.68	0.65	0.54			
Base of trench	0.42	0.55	0.61	0.71	0.65	0.56			

Figure 5: Trench 11 looking east

Figure 6: Ditch [37] looking north

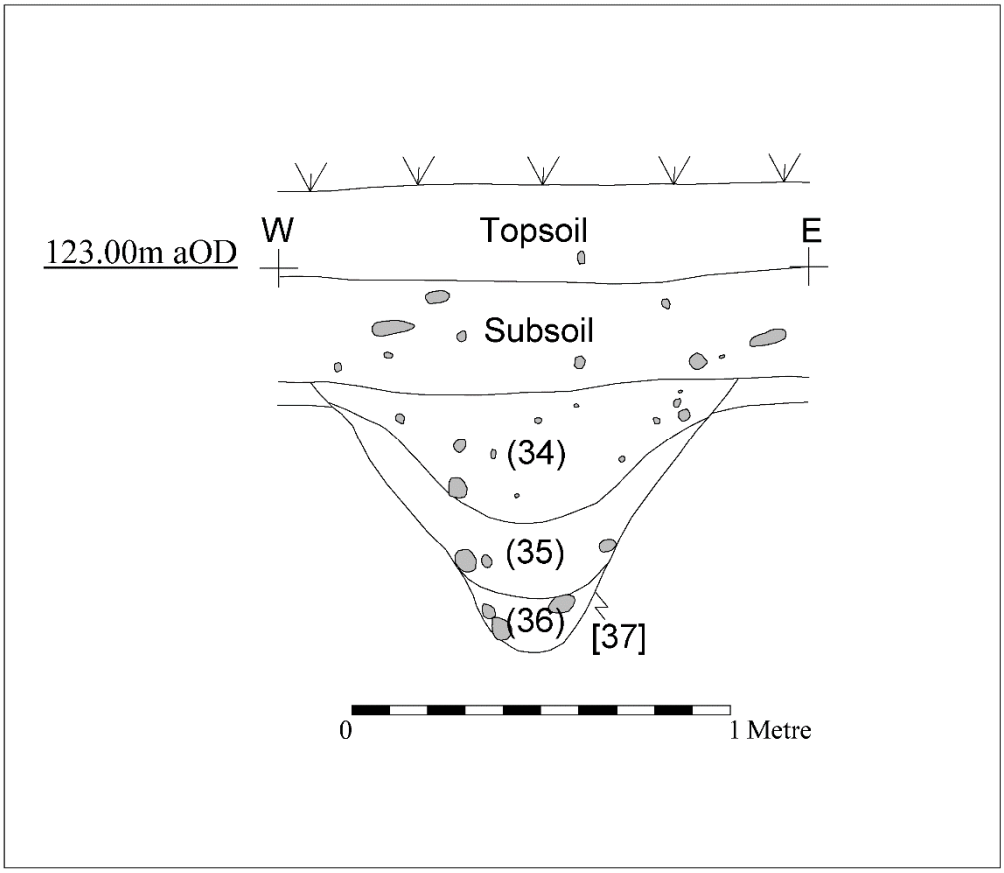

Figure 7: Ditch [37] section

Figure 8: Gully [39] looking north

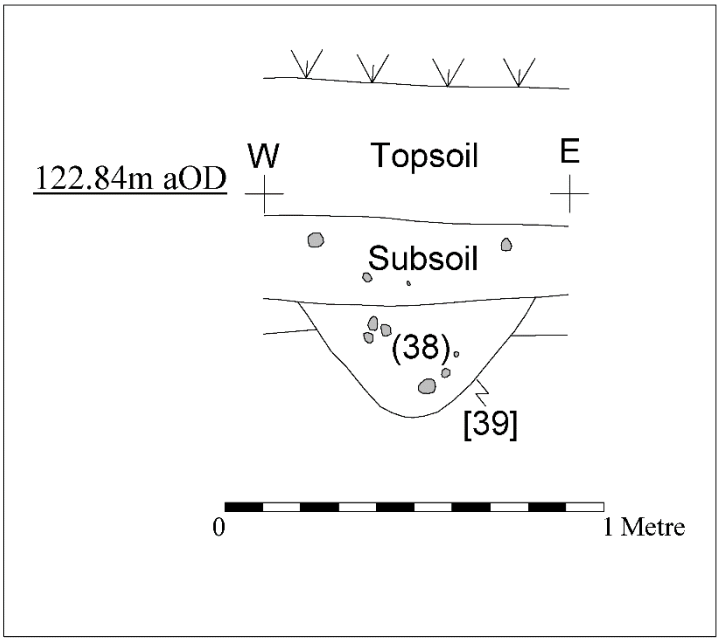

Figure 9: Gully [39] section

Trench 12

Trench 12 measured 19m x 1.5m, and was aligned northeast-southwest (Fig. 10). The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 0.32m and 0.45m. The natural was overlain by subsoil, 0.52m-0.64m thick. Cut into this was a single gully [40], aligned east-west with shallow concave sides and a flat base, 0.8m wide and 0.2m deep (Figs. 11 & 12). The primary fill (41) was mid brown sandy clay with flint, chalk and charcoal inclusions, 0.1m thick. The secondary fill (42) was dark brown-grey clay with charcoal inclusions, 0.14m thick. The natural was overlain by subsoil, 0.3m-0.35m thick. This was overlain by topsoil, 0.22m-0.32m thick.

Trench No.	Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	Archaeology?
12	19	1.5	28.5	0.58	0.69	Yes

Interval (m) from northeast end	0	5	10	15	19				
Topsoil depth	0.25	0.3	0.29	0.32	0.22				
Subsoil depth	0.3	0.32	0.35	0.3	0.3				
Top of natural substratum	0.55	0.62	0.64	0.62	0.52				
Base of trench	0.58	0.68	0.69	0.67	0.6				

Figure 10: Trench 12 looking southwest

Figure 11: Ditch [40] looking west

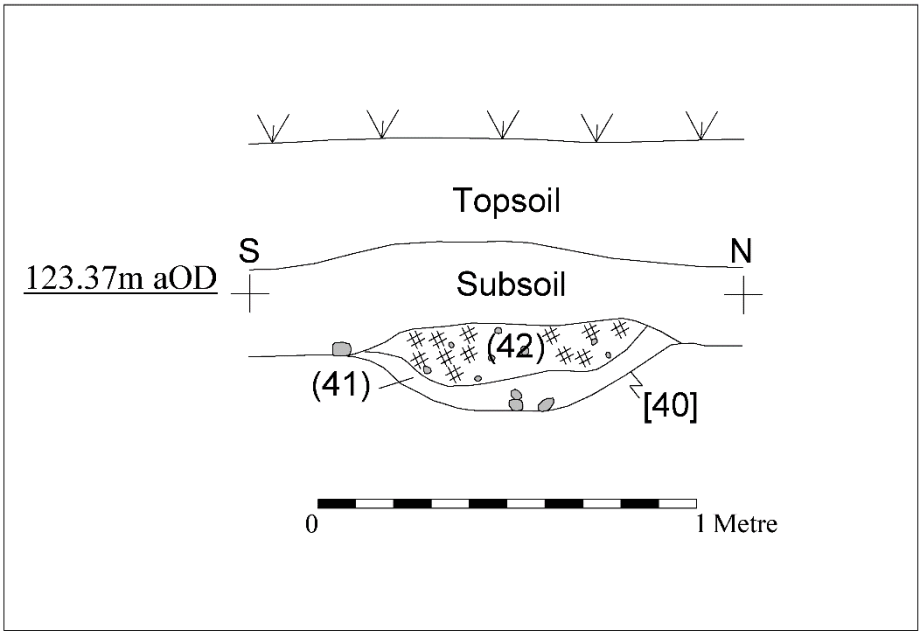

Figure 12: Gully [40] section

Trench 13

Trench 13 measured 20.6m x 1.5m, and was aligned north-south. The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 0.53m and 0.8m. The natural was overlain by subsoil, 0.25m-0.6m thick. This was overlain by topsoil, 0.2m-0.3m thick.

Trench No.	Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (sq. m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)	Archaeology?
13	20.6	1.5	30.9	0.6	0.85	No

Interval (m) from north end	0	5	10	15	20				

Topsoil depth	0.27	0.24	0.3	0.28	0.2				
Subsoil depth	0.4	0.45	0.3	0.25	0.6				
Top of natural substratum	0.67	0.69	0.6	0.53	0.8				
Base of trench	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.6	0.85				

Trench 14

Trench 14 measured 20.2m x 1.5m, and was aligned north-south. The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 0.53m and 0.82m. The natural was overlain by subsoil, 0.27m-0.6m thick. This was overlain by topsoil, 0.22m-0.32m thick.

Trench No.	**Length (m)**	**Width (m)**	**Area (sq. m)**	**Min. depth (m)**	**Max. depth (m)**	**Archaeology?**
14	20.2	1.5	0.6	0.84	0.6	0.84

Interval (m) from north end	**0**	**5**	**10**	**15**	**20**				
Topsoil depth	0.3	0.38	0.22	0.32	0.26				
Subsoil depth	0.3	0.28	0.6	0.35	0.27				
Top of natural substratum	0.6	0.66	0.82	0.67	0.53				
Base of trench	0.6	0.67	0.84	0.73	0.65				

Trench 15

Trench 15 measured 19.5m x 1.5m, and was aligned east-west. The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 0.38m and 0.56m. The natural was overlain by subsoil, 0.2m-0.31m thick. This was overlain by topsoil, 0.18m-0.27m thick.

Trench No.	**Length (m)**	**Width (m)**	**Area (sq. m)**	**Min. depth (m)**	**Max. depth (m)**	**Archaeology?**
15	19.5	1.5	29.5	0.44	0.6	No

Interval (m) from east end	**0**	**5**	**10**	**15**	**19.5**				
Topsoil depth	0.25	0.23	0.27	0.22	0.18				
Subsoil depth	0.31	0.28	0.28	0.25	0.2				
Top of natural substratum	0.56	0.5	0.55	0.47	0.38				
Base of trench	0.6	0.55	0.6	0.5	0.44				

Trench 16

Trench 16 measured 19.5m x 1.5m, and was aligned north-south (Fig. 13). The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 0.5m and 0.65m.Cut into this was a single gully [32] at the north end of the trench (Figs. 14 & 15). The gully was aligned east to west, with moderate sloping sides and a concave base, 0.6m wide. It had a single fill (33), mid brown sandy clay and small pebble inclusions, 0.25m thick. This was sealed by subsoil, 0.2m-0.4m thick. This was overlain by topsoil, 0.22m-0.31m thick.

Trench No.	**Length (m)**	**Width (m)**	**Area (sq. m)**	**Min. depth (m)**	**Max. depth (m)**	**Archaeology?**
16	19.5	1.5	29.5	0.53	0.68	Yes

Interval (m) from north end	**0**	**5**	**10**	**15**	**19.5**				
Topsoil depth	0.25	0.22	0.31	0.28	0.31				

Subsoil depth	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.22	0.25				
Top of natural substratum	0.65	0.62	0.51	0.5	0.55				
Base of trench	0.68	0.67	0.56	0.53	0.59				

Figure 13: Trench 16 looking south

Figure 14: Gully [32] looking west

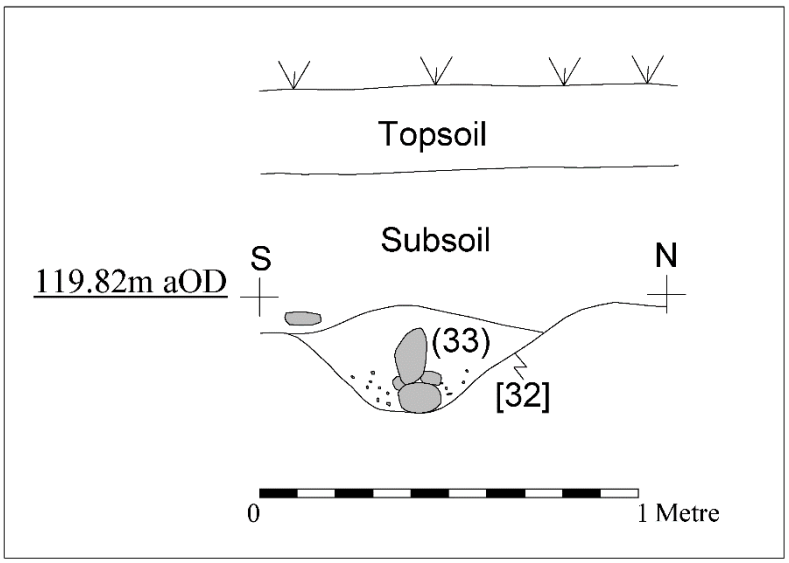

Figure 15: Gully [32] section

Discussion

The second phase of evaluation has identified further areas of archaeology and also blank areas across the remaining part of the development area.

In the north-western part of the area, gullies [39] and [40] appear to be consistent, in character and date, with other features encountered in the previous trenching phase. The larger ditch [37] may also represent contemporary activity as part of the wider enclosure system indicated by the geophysical survey.

The area to the northwest, where the Iron Age features were identified, appears to be a continuation of the settlement activity. Although the features in this area were not as clearly represented on the geophysical survey results, there is obviously some extension to the archaeology in that part of the site.

The Iron Age gully [32] in Trench 16 represents a possible northern extension to the main enclosure complex or an outlying feature.

The trenches in the south-western part of the development area produced quite different results, with shallow and fairly sterile linear features suggestive of medieval ridge and furrow agriculture.

The Finds

Middle-Late Iron Age Pottery and Fired Clay

Nicholas J. Cooper

Introduction

A total of 26 sherds of Middle-Late Iron Age pottery weighing 205g, and with an average sherd weight of 8g, were recovered from three stratified contexts (38), (41) and (42). The pottery is in good condition, unabraded, and each context group represent joining sherds from a single vessel, indicating a lack of stratigraphic disturbance. In addition a single small fragment of fired clay (4g) with a flat surface, representing burnt daub from a wattle and daub structure came from (41) and four amorphous fragments (3g) came from (42). These have not been retained in the finds archive. A natural flint was recovered from (34) and has also been discarded.

Methodology

The Iron Age pottery was classified using the Leicestershire Prehistoric pottery form and fabric series using low power microscopy (Marsden 2011, 61) and quantified by sherd count, weight (g) and EVEs. The assemblage has been analysed in accordance with *The Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology* (Barclay *et al*. 2016).

Results

The remains of three separate vessels were identified from the three contexts (Table 1), all broadly belonging to the East Midlands scored ware tradition of the Middle to Late Iron Age (Elsdon 1992).

Table 1 M-L Iron Age pottery

Iron Age Pottery from Nottingham Rd Melton XA6.2016										
Cont	**Fabric**	**Form**	**Part**	**Rim**	**Decor**	**Sherds**	**Wght**	**EVEs**	**Diam**	**Date**
38	S2	jar	body			10	70			M-L IA
41	S1	jar	rim	upright	scored	1	40	0.08	200	M-L IA
42	S2	jar	base			15	95		65	M-L IA
Total						**26**	**205**	**0.08**	**ASW=**	**8g**

Discussion and potential

Only one vessel, from (41), a slack-shouldered hand-made jar with an upright rim (200mm diameter) and scored decoration, manufactured in a shell-tempered fabric (S1) is typical, and paralleled locally at Empingham for example (Cooper 2000, 68, fig.32.8). The other two jars, from (38) and (42), are manufactured in a quartz-tempered fabric with small amount of shell added (Fabric S2) and have reduced dark grey, slightly smoothed, undecorated external surfaces. They are more globular in form and are similar to the jars found in the Late Iron Age phase at Grove Farm, Enderby (Elsdon 1992b ill.26.6). A date in the later 1st century BC or first half of the 1st century AD looks likely for the assemblage overall. This evidence supports and builds on that from the previous evaluation work in the adjacent area at Hilltop Farm where 47 sherds (341g) of East Midlands scored ware was recovered (Clapton 2016, 26 ULAS report **2016-038**). Though small, the present assemblage also demonstrates the survival of well-stratified and dateable ceramics across the site that will inform the chronological, economic and social understanding of the Iron Age occupation when further work is undertaken.

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The Animal Bones

William Johnson

Introduction

A small animal bone assemblage (54 fragments) was collected by hand during excavation at Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray. The animal bones were collected from five contexts. Two were ditch fills and three were gully fills. All of the contexts were dated to the Late Iron Age.

Methodology

The bones were identified by comparison to reference material held at the University of Leicester and recorded in a catalogue (table 1). Condition was scored using Harland et al.'s (2003) scale.

Results

The condition of the bones was described as 'good' across all contexts. No apparent signs of weathering, root etching or gnawing were noted on any bones. It was possible to reassemble many of the fragments from (33) resulting in only a small number of unidentified bones from this context. Other contexts were more fragmentary, mostly identified as modern damage.

Many of the bones from (33) could be identified to species, the majority belonging to adult dog, probably representing a single individual. An atlas, axis and two incisors were identified as equid. The only identifiable elements from the other contexts were cattle; a premolar from (38) and metapodial from (34). The majority of the other fragments were indeterminate but it was possible to identify a fragment of skull and long bone shaft, both from medium mammals. No butchery or pathology was noted on any of the bones.

Discussion

The animal boness present in (33) represent working animals. They are unlikely to have been deposited as food waste, instead potentially representing the animals' burial. The other contexts are more likely representative of food waste including cattle bones.

Statement of Potential

No further work is required on the assemblage under study. Should further excavation work be carried out at the site analysis of the bone is recommended as the bone is well preserved with complete elements being present and fragmentation levels are not high in comparison to other Iron Age assemblages. It should be possible to reveal animal husbandry strategies and diet in greater detail should a larger assemblage from the site be available for study in the future.

Bibliography

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The Charred Plant Remains

Adam Santer

Introduction

During an archaeological evaluation at this site, one sample was processed for the analysis of charred plant remains. The sample (sample 5) was from the fill (42) of a small Iron Age ditch or gully [40]. The analysis of the charred plant remains recovered from this sample is presented here, together with a discussion of what this can potentially tell us about the diet, crop husbandry strategies and environment at the site through time.

Methodology

The sample consisted of a light grey clay and was processed in a York tank using a 0.5mm mesh with flotation into a 0.3mm mesh sieve. The flotation fraction (flot) was sorted in its entirety for plant remains and other artefacts under a x10-40 stereo microscope. Plant remains were identified by comparison to modern reference material available at ULAS and names follow Stace (1991).

Results

The sample contained four charred plant remains; three indeterminate cereal grains and one goosefoot seed (Chenopodium), were found in 8 litres of soil, which equates to 0.5 items per litre. The specimens were very fragmentary and this hindered identification to species. Charcoal fragments were also present in the sample, but those measuring over 2mm in length (i.e. suitable for radiocarbon analysis) were rare. Modern rootlets were present in a large quantity indicating heavy disturbance to the context.

Discussion

The specimens present in the sample likely represent residue from processing cereal grains for consumption and food spillage that had burnt on a hearth. The ash from the hearth would have formed a general scatter across the site collecting in open features such as this ditch/gully.

Statement of potential

Due to the small sample size and fragmentary nature of the specimens that were present, little information was gained as to diet, crop husbandry strategies and environment at the site. However, if further work is undertaken, a suitable sampling strategy should be implemented.

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Archive

The site archive for this phase consists of: 1 A4 context index, 8 A5 context sheets, 1 A4 drawing index, 1 A4 drawing record sheet, 1 A4 sample index, 2 A4 photo index sheet, 42 digital photographs and 1 A2 permatrace sheet. It will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the accession number X.A6.2016.

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.

PROJECT DETAILS	**Oasis No**	universi1-323128		
	Project Name	Hilltop Farm, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray		
	Start/end dates of field work	23-10-17 – 26-10-17		
	Previous/Future Work	Evaluation 2016-038		
	Project Type	Evaluation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Pasture		
	Monument Type/Period	Iron-Age		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery (I/A)		
	Development Type	Residential		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
	Planning Ref.	17/00763/FUL		
PROJECT LOCATION	**Site Address/Postcode**	Hilltop Farm, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0NX		
	Study Area	115 – 120m OD		
	Site Coordinates	SK 74111 21026		
	Height OD			
PROJECT CREATORS	**Organisation**	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (CCC)		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	John Thomas		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Nathan Flavell		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Developer – Mr M Brown & HSSP Architects		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		**Physical**	**Digital**	**Paper**
	Recipient	Leics MusService	Leics MusService	Leics MusService
	ID (Acc. No.)	X.A6.2016	X.A6.2016	X.A6.2016
	Contents	Pottery, bone	Photos	Context index, context sheets, photo records, sample record, contact sheet, permatrace
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	**Type**	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	Archaeological Evaluation at Hilltop Farm, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire		
	Author	Flavell, N.		

	Other bibliographic details	ULAS Report No 2017-182
	Date	2017
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester
	Description	Developer Report A4 pdf

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to the client and contractors for their co-operation and assistance on site. Fieldwork was undertaken by Nathan Flavell and Claire LaCombe; the report was written by Nathan Flavell and the project was managed for ULAS by John Thomas.

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23/11/2017

Appendix – Trench plans

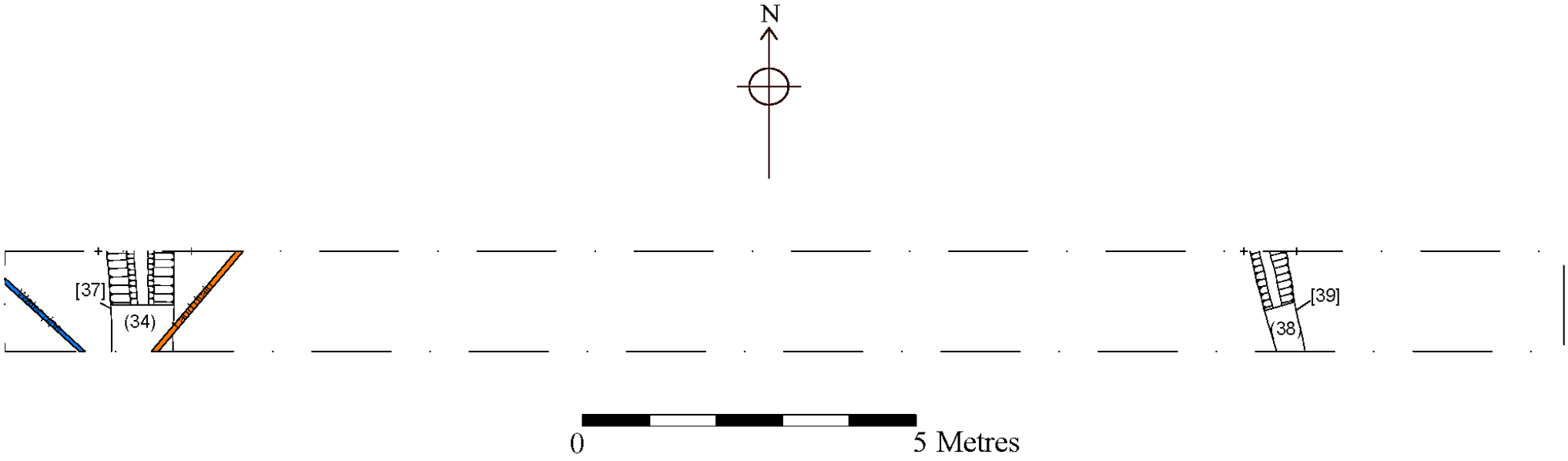

Figure 16: Trench 11 plan

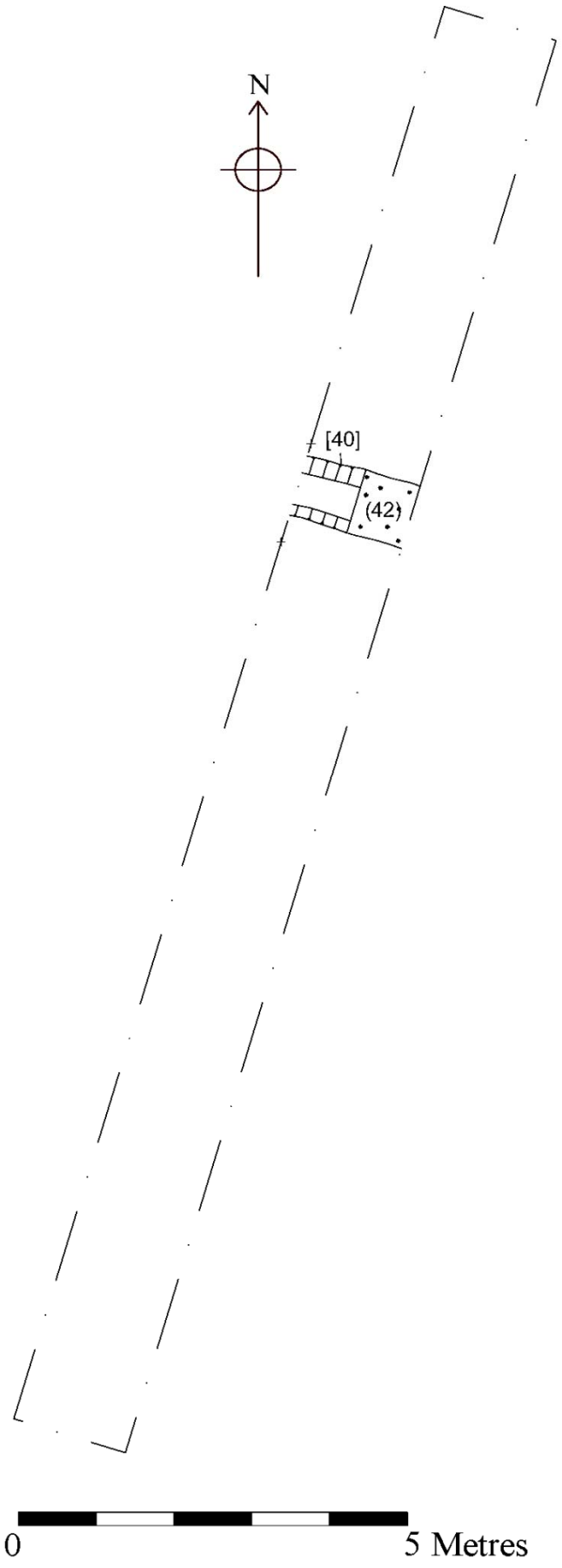

Figure 17: Trench 12 plan

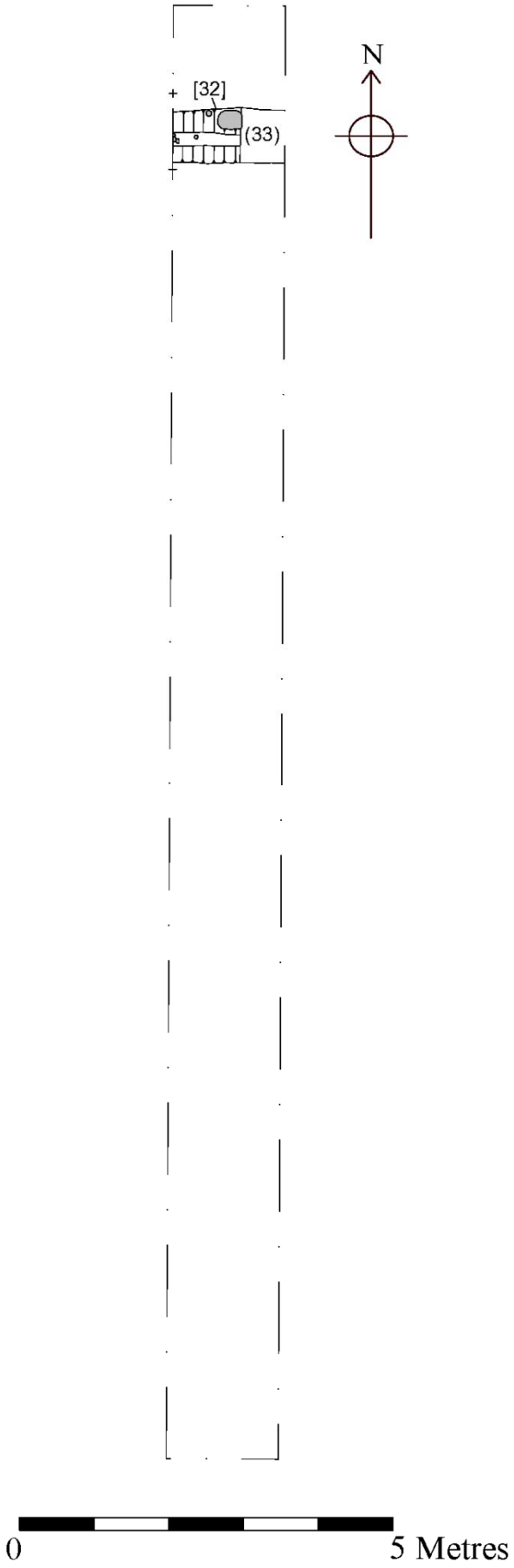

Figure 18: Trench 16 plan

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