



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**Paradise Found:
An Archaeological Excavation on
Land opposite
The Coach House,
Leicester Road,
Sapcote,
Leicestershire
NGR: SP 49321 93437**

Donald Clark



ULAS Report No 2018-135
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An Archaeological Excavation
On land opposite
The Coach House, Leicester Road,
Sapcote, Leicestershire**

NGR: SP 49321 93437

Planning Authority: Blaby District Council

Planning Reference: 16/1386/FUL

Client: Mrs J. Clark

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

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Paradise Found: An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation on land opposite the Coach House, Leicester Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire

Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation of three small areas on land known as Paradise Found, situated opposite The Coach House, Leicester Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 49321 93437) prior to erection of a hay barn, equipment storage shed and extension to existing stable block.

The Planning Archaeologist required the footprint of the three proposed buildings to be stripped down to the first archaeological layer or the natural sub stratum to expose any surviving archaeology. The archaeological fieldwork was intended to provide an appropriate mitigation strategy to record the heritage assets to be impacted upon.

Of the three areas stripped only one, in Area 3, contained archaeology, a section of a Romano British ditch. Pottery, animal bone and an environmental sample were recovered from the ditch and drawings were made and photographs taken.

A record of the archaeological excavation will be transferred to the Leicestershire Museums Service under the Accession Number X.A65.2018.

Introduction

An archaeological excavation was undertaken between the 24th and 29th May 2018 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Mrs J. Clark on land known as Paradise Found, situated opposite The Coach House, Leicester Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 49321 93437). A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; Score 2017) had been produced by ULAS for the planning advisors to Melton Borough Council, which provided details of the aims, objectives and methodologies to be adopted during the course of the work.

A Roman villa is located in the vicinity of the site and an archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation prior to construction was therefore required by the Planning Archaeologist to provide a record of any archaeological remains which might be present in mitigation of the impact of the proposed development in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Section 16: Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (2014).

Site location, Topography and Geology

The sites is located on the eastern side of the village off the B4669 Leicester Road (Fig. 1). It lies within a series of grassed fields and paddocks (Fig. 2). The land is relatively level at a height of c.89m O.D. There are three small areas for development.

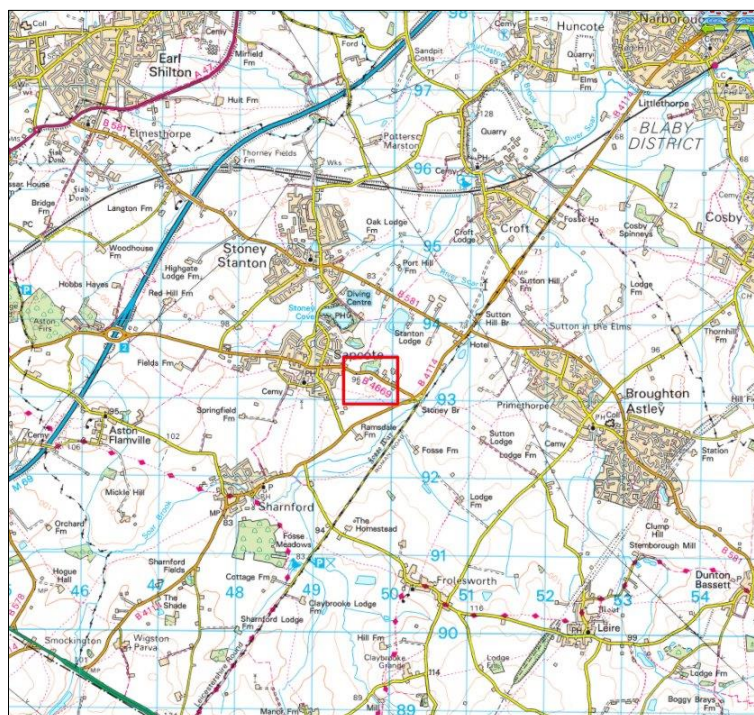


Figure 1: Location of the proposed site

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The British Geological Survey identifies the bedrock geology of the area as bands of mudstone, specifically of the Mercia Mudstone Group of the Triassic Period overlain with superficial Thrusingham Member Diamicton deposits.

Following the NPPF the planning authority required that a strip, map and sample excavation is undertaken be undertaken in order to record any archaeological remains are present and ascertain their character and extent.

Historical and Archaeological Background

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record shows that a Roman villa complex lies within the wider application site, extending into the former Calver Hill Quarry to the south-west where a tessellated pavement was found in 1770 with further artefacts recorded since then. In the 1970s structural remains of part of a bath suite with painted wall plaster were found. The earliest dated usage is metalworking in the mid-1st century AD, although the villa appears to have been re-used as a tile and tesserae workshop in the later Roman period.

Although various groundworks have been undertaken across the site, no systematic archaeological investigation has been undertaken making it hard to determine the extent of the archaeological remains.



Figure 2: Outline of development area, to the east of Sapcote village (provided by client)

Roman Villa

The HER has a number of records relating to the Roman villa which are summarised below (Fig. 4). Notes of a Roman villa start as early as 1770 with the discovery of a tessellated pavement along with building foundations. Further structural remains were discovered in the C20th, along with various finds (pottery, coins, tile, etc).

Nichols (1811) records that in c.1770 a tessellated pavement was found at 'Black Piece' adjacent to Calver Hill. It was similar to one found near Lincoln Cathedral. Finds included a silver coin of Vitellius, a small brass coin of Constantine and a Roman votive axe. Nichols says that building foundations were visible in his day, the stones strongly cemented together, while in c.1810 massive Roman tiles, pieces of pottery and large slates were dug up in making a pit.

In the 1920s Pickering looked at the site and recorded coins, tesserae and large pot found by quarrymen. He excavated a pit containing pots, bones, oyster shells and building debris. Finds included a honestone, bone pins, rubbing stones, painted wall plaster, slate, tiles (tegulae, imbrices), coarse tesserae, nails, glass and charcoal. He also opened trial trenches and found a thick mortar floor (Fig. 5). He also noted where the tenant said that he found a flag pavement some 3-4' down.

In the 1950s R Abbott found Roman pottery at SP 499 930 and TJ Turl found probable Roman foundations close by (he also had a 'Roman mortar', possibly from this site). In 1968-9 S Smith recovered building material, Samian, coarse wares and noted occupation levels in the north face of the approach road. A coin of Tetricus was found nearby. Fieldwalking revealed a scatter of tile and limestone tesserae, and building debris and pottery came from the approach road.

In 1974 50m of the approach road was cleaned and a Roman wall with pitched stone foundations was traced for over 25m. In 1975 work showed that this wall turned to the north and ran for over 50m, possibly ending in a buttress and forming 2 sides of an enclosure. A quern was among the finds. Trenches in Black Piece Field revealed part of the plan of a bath suite along with voussoir shaped box tiles and curved painted wall plaster.

Aerial photographs show a wall, presumably that noted previously, running across Black Piece with other possible parch marks around it. In 1979 Mr G A Blunt found in Black Piece 2 coins, one illegible Roman and one of Maximianus (306-8) and a copper punch of ?Mediterranean origin.

On 02/03/99 the museums service were told of a 'lot' of Roman material, mostly coins, coming from a large field immediately south-east of the quarry, to the south of the track. In 2003 it was recorded that a large quantity of Roman pottery was found when the site was bulldozed for a road.

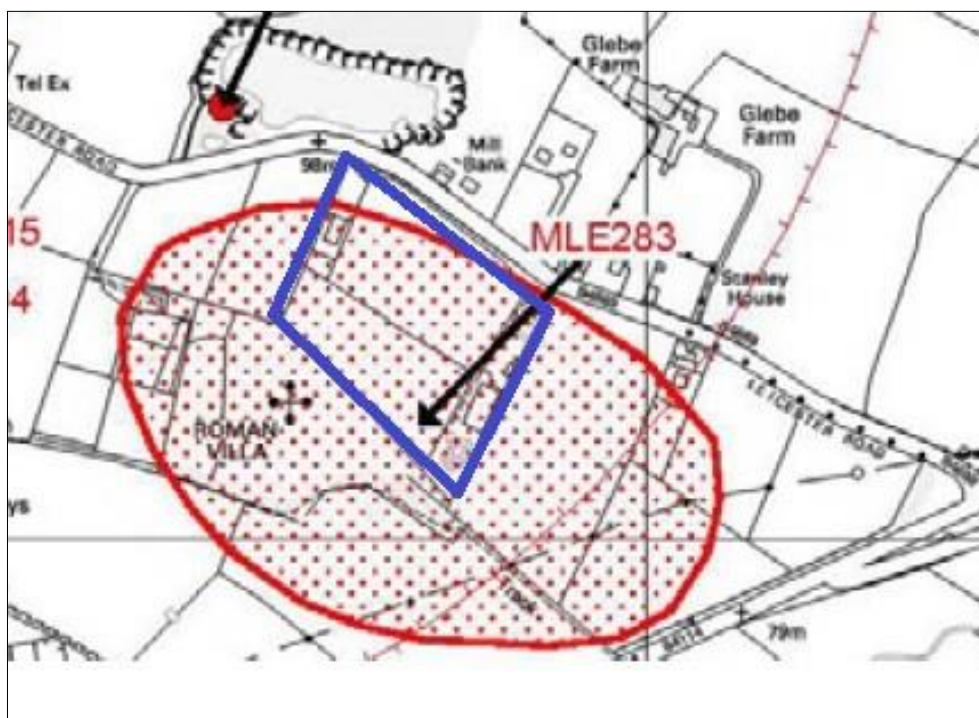


Figure 3: Roman Villa area (MLE283), with extent of site in blue

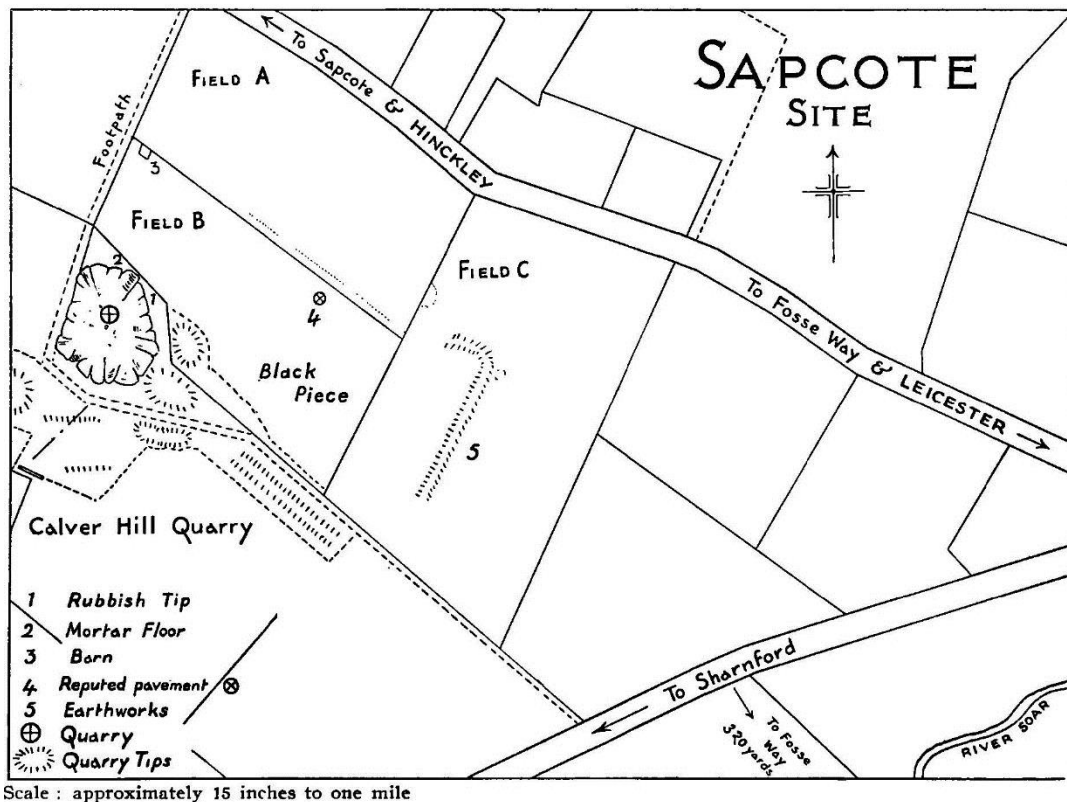


Figure 4: Map from Leicestershire Archaeological and History Society transactions Vol.18. (1934-35). Fields A and B are now known as Paradise Found

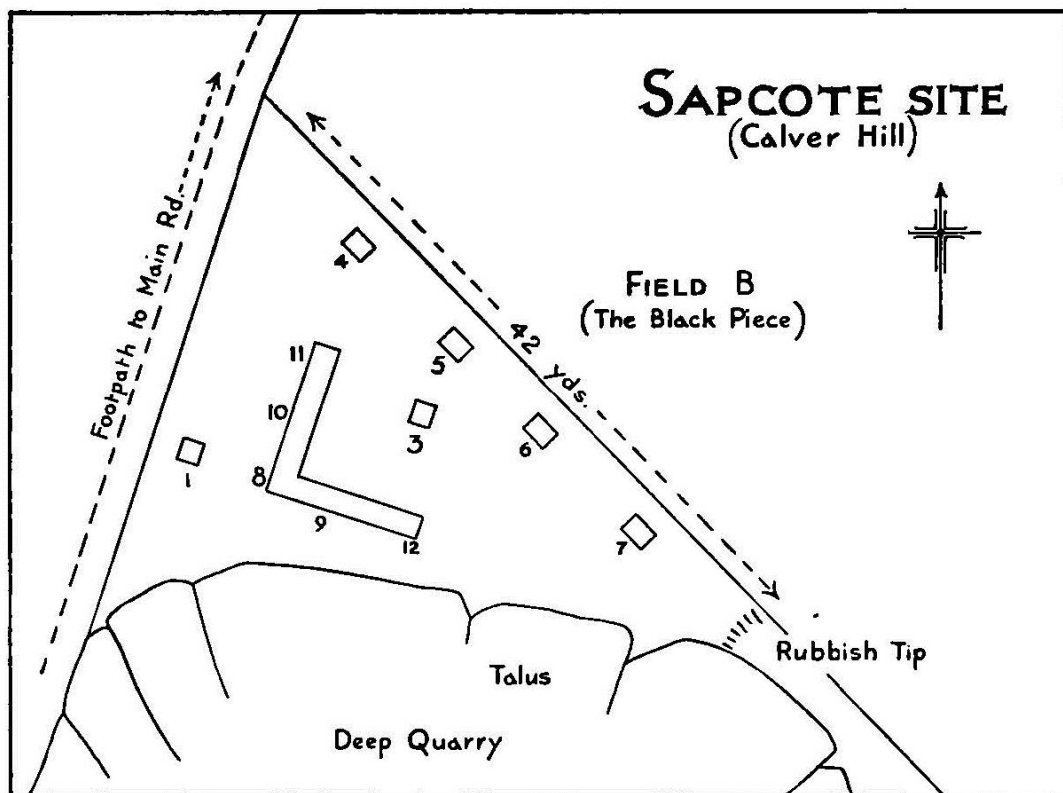


Figure 5: Detailed position of trenching carried out in the 1920s by A. J. Pickering

Methodology

The work comprised the stripping of overburden by an experienced archaeologists across the three areas (Fig. 6). Excavation was carried out with a machine fitted with a flat-bladed bucket to expose the underlying strata. Topsoil and overburden was removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

The three areas were excavated down to the natural undisturbed ground. All excavation by machine and hand was undertaken with a view to avoid damage to archaeological deposits or features which appear worthy of preservation *in situ* or more detailed investigation.

The areas were left open but were to be backfilled by client at the earliest opportunity.



Figure 6: Areas of development stripped (provided by client)

Results

Area 1

Located to the east of the site and adjacent to existing stable, Area 1 represents the footprint of an extension to the stable which when complete will provide a building suitable for educational activities. The area was stripped of topsoil and subsoil to a depth of 0.55m revealing a greyish yellow clay natural sub stratum. A stone land drain, running north-east to south-west was

uncovered and a shallow drainage gully which fed into the drain was observed. This gully was modern and ran in a north-west to south-east direction (Figs 7-8).

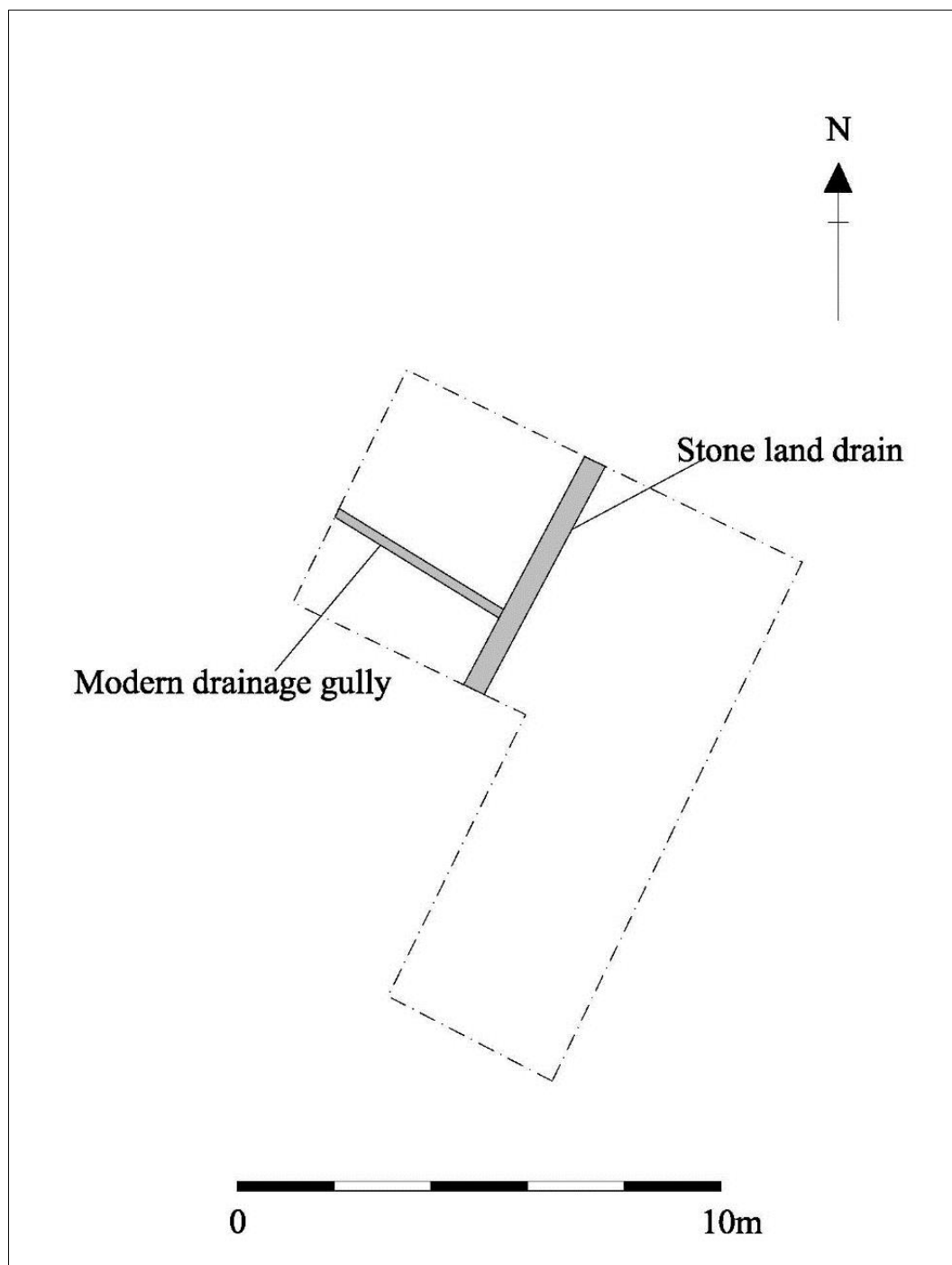


Figure 7: Plan of Area 1



Figure 8: Area 1 following excavation

Area 2

Located in the southern most corner of the site, Area 2 represents the footprint of a proposed tool store. The area had previously been built up by the landowner, hence natural sub stratum

of yellow clay was not seen until a depth of 0.90m (Figs 9-10). There were no archaeological deposits or features within this area.

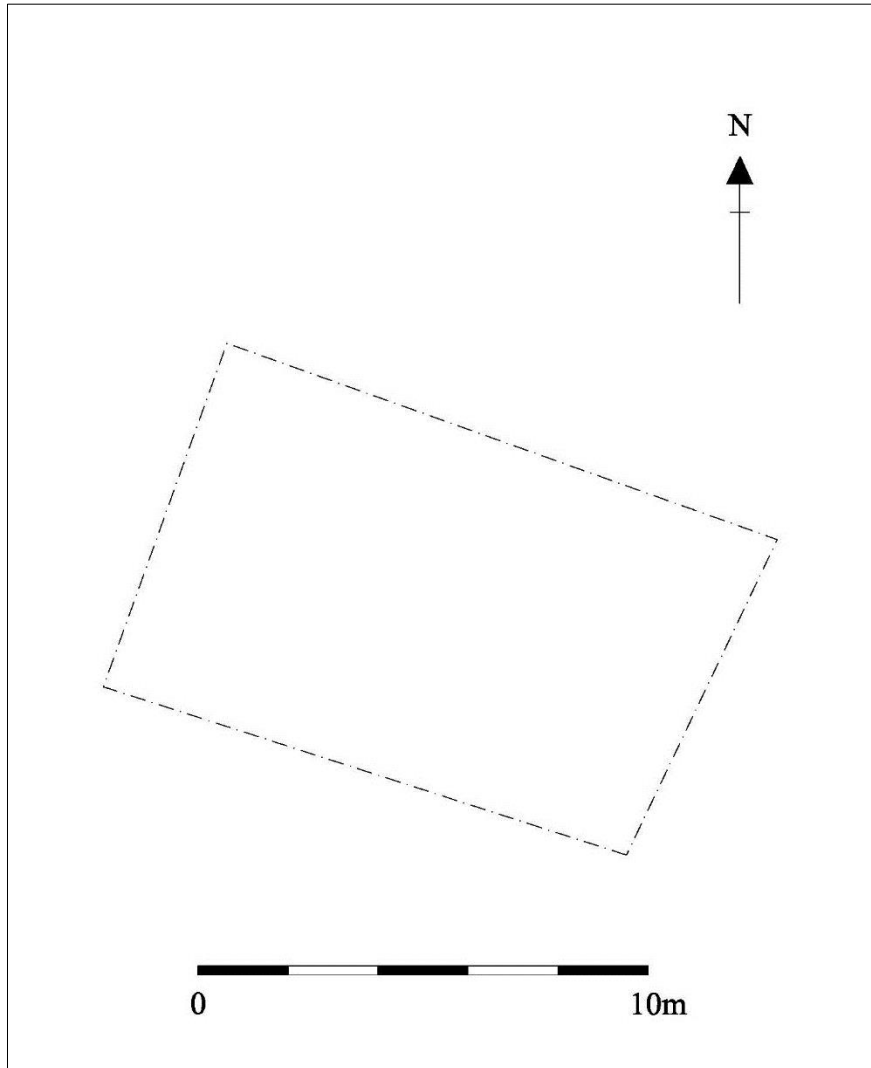


Figure 9: Plan of Area 2



Figure 10: Area 2 following excavation. Natural ground observed prior to flooding

Area 3

Located midway along the southern boundary of the site, Area 3 represents the footprint of a proposed hay barn. The area had previously been stripped of topsoil and subsoil and was overlain with hardcore. The hardcore was removed to reveal the natural sub stratum of mottled yellow and grey clay. In the south west end of the area a ditch was observed. The ditch [1] measured 1.63m in width and was 0.53m deep and seemed to extend across the stripped area in a north-west to south-east direction (Fig. 11) although flooding in the south-east corner of the site made it difficult to see (Fig. 12). The ditch section revealed a moderately sloping sided ditch with a concave base and the cut contained 2 fills (Fig. 13). Fill (2) was a grey yellow silty clay and fill (3) was a grey brown silty sand. Within fill (3) two sherds of Roman grey ware weighing 12g were retrieved. The sherds join representing a single vessel, most likely a jar or bowl. They are undiagnostic with abraded surfaces, therefore a date from the late 1st-2nd century through to the 4th century is all that can be given.

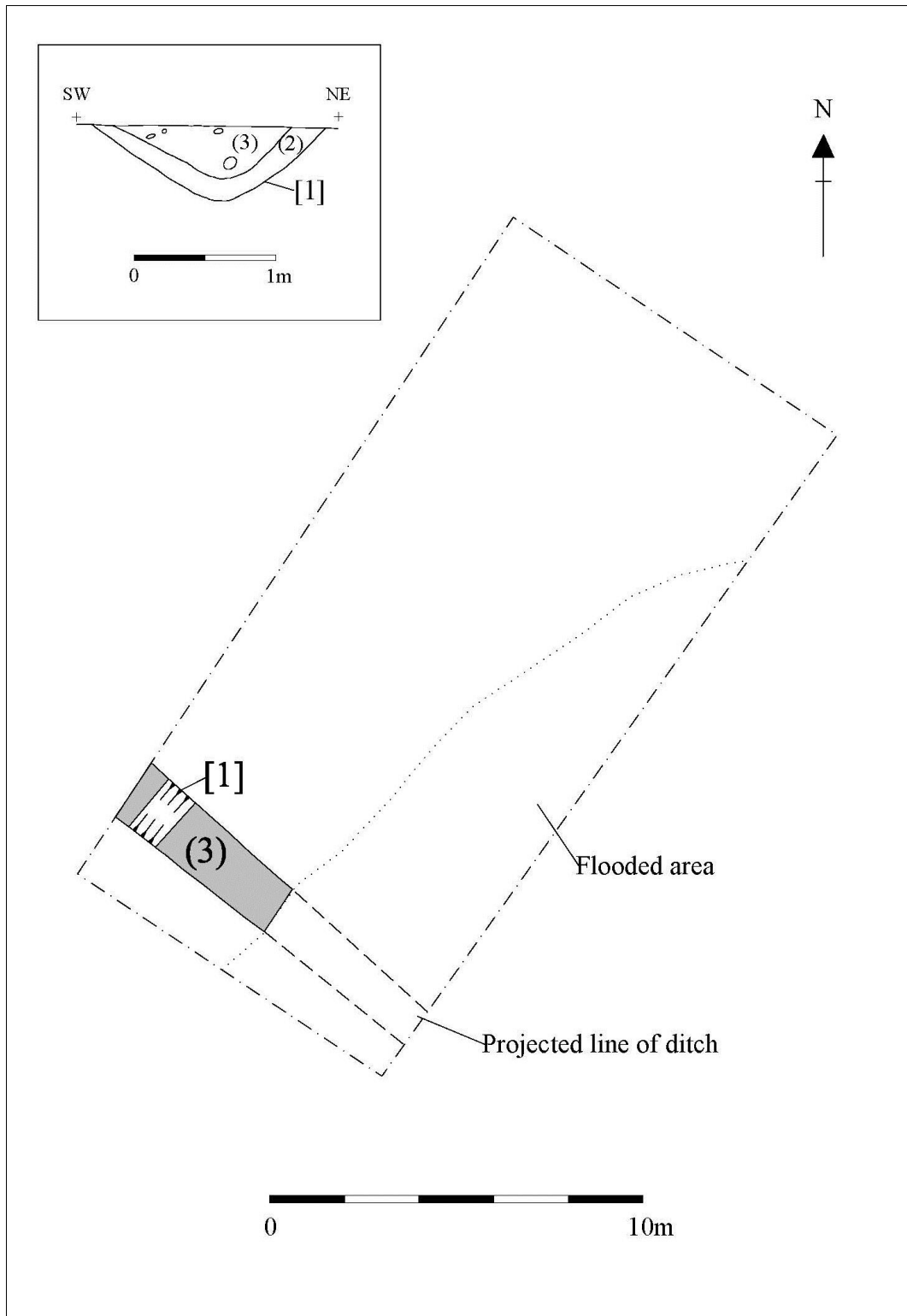


Figure 11: Plan of Area 3 with ditch section insert



Figure 12: Area 3 following excavation.



Figure 13: Ditch section [1] excavated in Area 3

Conclusion

The fieldwork was designed to recover evidence of archaeological activity within the three proposed development areas. In Area 3 a Roman ditch was identified which produced pottery loosely dated to between the late 1st century and 4th century. The ditch was drawn in plan and has been satisfactorily recorded. It is probable that the ditch was contemporary with the villa site which is thought to be situated directly west of Area 3. No further evidence of Roman activity was observed during the fieldwork. The three areas due for proposed development hold no further archaeological deposits and any development would not impact upon the heritage assets of the area.

Publication

ULAS supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. The online OASIS form at <http://ads.ac.uk/project/oasis> will be completed detailing the results of the project. Once the report has become a public document following its incorporation into the HER it may be placed on the web-site.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the client for supplying the machine and operator, Claire LaCombe of ULAS for assistance during the fieldwork, Elizabeth Johnson, also of ULAS, for pottery identification and to Vicki Score for managing the project.

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Oasis

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-325098		
	Project Name	Paradise Found: An Archaeological strip, map and sample Excavation on land opposite The Coach House, Leicester Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire		
	Start/end dates of field work	24/05/2018 to 29/05/2018		
	Previous/Future Work	Not known / Not known		
	Project Type	Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample excavation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Petting Zoo and Educational Centre		
	Monument Type/Period	Ditch/Roman		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery / Roman Bone		
	Development Type	Agricultural buildings		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
	Planning Ref.	14/00802/OUTM		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Paradise Found, opposite The Coach House, Leicester Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire LE9 4JF		
	Study Area	400 square metres		
	Site Coordinates	SP 49321 93437		
	Height OD	89m OD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (LCC)		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Vicki Score		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Donald Clark		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Landowner		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	LCC MusService	LCC MusService	LCC MusService
	ID (Acc. No.)	X.A65.2018	X.A65.2018	X.A65.2018
	Contents	Pottery	Photos	Field Notes, drawings
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
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LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Vicki Score
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

