

**An Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey
on land at Highfield Farm,
Findern, South Derbyshire
(SK 318 325)**

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***For: Miller Homes East Midlands Ltd, David Wilson North Midlands Ltd and Taylor
Woodrow Development Ltd.***

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An Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey on land at Highfield Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire (SK 318 325).

Summary

An archaeological fieldwalking survey was carried out by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land at Highfield Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire (SK 318 325) for Miller Homes East Midlands Ltd, David Wilson North Midlands Ltd and Taylor Woodrow Development Ltd. The fieldwalking survey revealed small quantities of Roman and medieval pottery in the majority of the fields, probably indicating manuring during these periods. In addition a small cluster of heat-affected stones were located suggesting possible prehistoric activity.

The archive will be deposited with Derbyshire County Council, under the Accession number DBYMU 2006-401.

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Miller Homes to carry out a fieldwalking survey on land at Highfield Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire (SK 318 325; Fig. 1). The work was undertaken as part of an archaeological impact assessment in advance of a proposed mixed use development, comprising 250 dwellings, together with the provision of a school or country park.

2. Site Description

The proposed development site is located at Highfield Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire (SK 318 325; Fig. 1). It consists of an area of *c.*50 ha, of which *c.*10 ha was under cultivation and suitable for the fieldwalking survey (Fig. 2; Fields 2, 3, 12, 15, 16). The fieldwalking survey was conducted on the 18th and 19th December 2006.

The study area lies at a height of *c.* 53m OD, and comprises a series of arable fields, mostly rectangular and bounded by hedges and fences, some ploughed and some pasture.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 141 (Loughborough) indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Middle Triassic Cotgrave Sandstone with Holocene Lacustrine deposits in the north-east of the site.

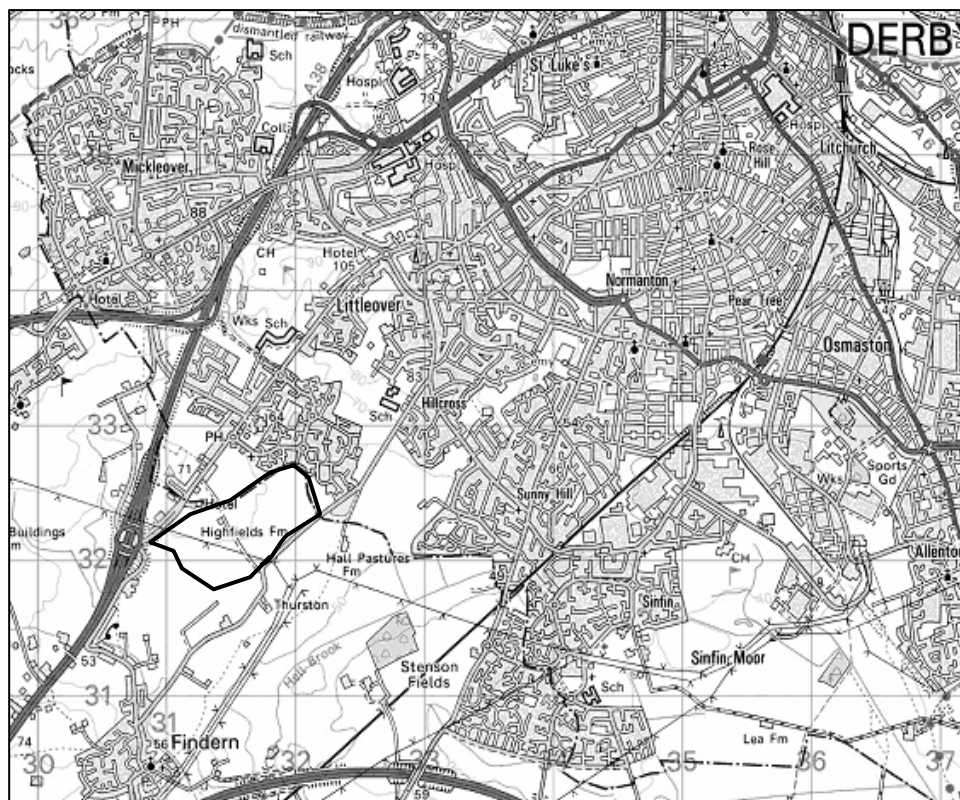


Figure 1: Location plan.

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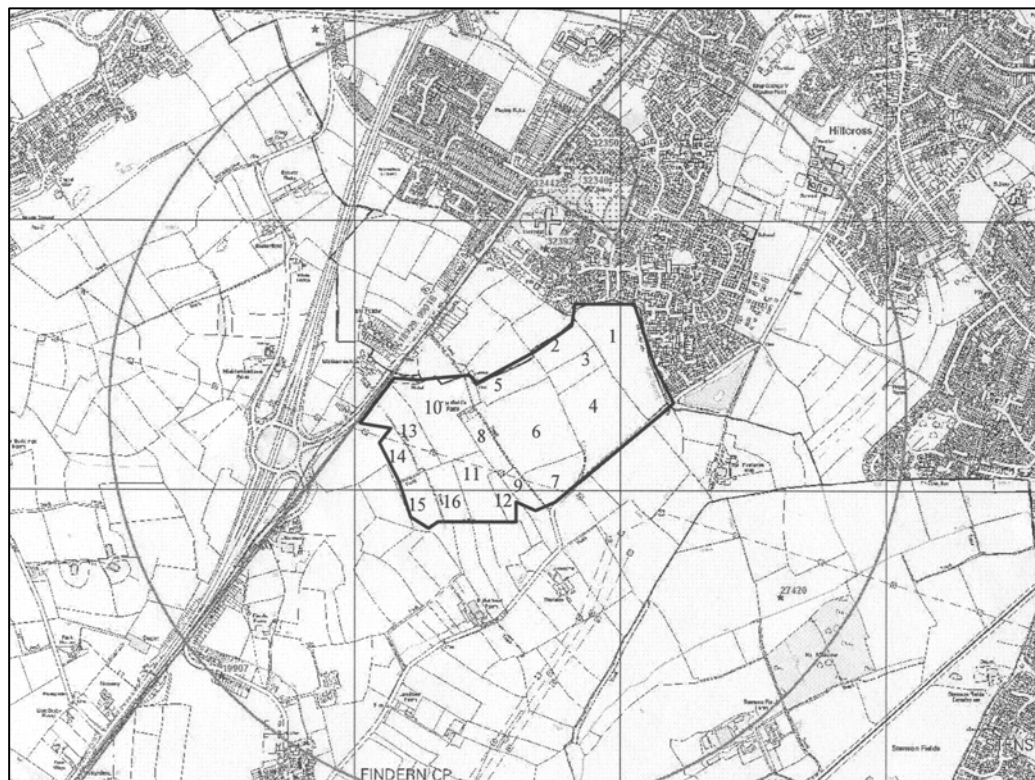


Figure 2: Field numbers.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

A desk-based assessment has been prepared by ULAS (Hunt 2006) which concluded that the site has not previously been subject to archaeological survey. Its location, straddling the boundaries of two parishes, suggests that it is likely to contain buried medieval settlement remains. However, its prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon potential is uncharted. Although there are no known remains directly adjacent to the site, Roman and prehistoric remains are known from the surrounding area; a Bronze Age cemetery and prehistoric pit alignment were discovered to the north and the line of the Roman Rykneld Street passes close, or possibly through the site, in the north-west corner. The Bronze Age cremations are thought to represent the earliest intact archaeology in Derby. In addition the wider landscape contains monuments of national importance; the Findern cursus, an important Neolithic monument, lies 3km to the south. Further archaeological discoveries have been uncovered at Willington quarry, 4km to the south, including features dating from the Neolithic to the Roman period.

Map evidence indicates that the land remained undeveloped during the post medieval period, the possibility of alluvial deposits to the north-west (Hunt 2006).

4. Aims and Objectives

The principal aims of the archaeological survey as outlined in the specification (ULAS 2006) were:

- To identify possible areas of archaeological potential liable to be threatened by the proposed development.
- To establish the location, extent, date, and significance of any archaeological material located.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

The objective is to gain an indication of the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits in order that an appropriate mitigation strategy may be adopted for remains that may be affected by the development proposals.

5. Methodology

The fields were walked on the 18th and 19th December 2006. Baselines and transects were set out using tapes and canes along the edge of each field. The fields were then walked in transects 20 metres apart, with all finds marked *in situ*.

Fields 2 and 3 had moderate crop cover. In Fields 15 and 16 the crop, if any, had not started to grow and Field 12 had recently been ploughed. The visibility was generally

good with overcast skies creating an even light except when Field 12 was walked when conditions were poor with low sunlight creating strong shadows.

Finds were recorded using an EDM. Each find was given an individual identification number, bagged and removed from the field. All finds were recorded. Heat-affected stones were recorded but not collected. The finds were later processed and examined by the appropriate specialist.

All archaeological work adhered to the *Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*.

6. Results

A total of 22 finds were recorded, comprising thirteen sherds of pottery, seven fragments of building material, three heat-affected stones, one land drain fragment and a single piece of slag. The finds were examined by Nicholas Cooper, and their identifications can be found in Appendix 1. No finds were recovered from Field 12. This may be partly due to the lack of weathering on the newly ploughed field and the light conditions. Plots of the finds from fields 2, 3, 15 and 16 can be seen below in Figure 3.

Prehistoric material

Heat-affected stones can indicate the presence of hearths or cooking areas and are often associated with prehistoric burnt mounds. Their presence as a small cluster in Field 16 is suggestive of possible prehistoric activity though a similar effect can be produced on stones and pebbles during stubble burning.

Romano-British pottery

Derbyshire Ware pottery dating to the 2nd to 3rd centuries was recovered in very small quantities from Fields 3, 15 and 16. Field 2 produced a single sherd of Greyware. The pottery was abraded in nature suggesting that it has been residual in the ploughsoil for some time.

The Roman pottery may have found its way into the area via activity along Rykniel Street, the Roman road which passes through the northern part of the site. Alternatively it could be evidence of manuring during this period.

Medieval pottery

Five sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from Fields 2, 3, 15 and 16 during the fieldwalking survey.

The medieval and later pottery is likely to be the result of the manuring of the medieval fields associated with the nearby villages of Findern, Littleover and Mickleover. The high degree of abrasion and the small sherd size of some of the medieval material also suggests prolonged agricultural activity, including ploughing in the fields.

Modern material

All of the modern material came from Fields 15 and 16. The majority of the material comprised rooftile and floortile and was found as a general spread across the fields. The building material from Field 15 probably originates from the derelict modern brick building situated in the north-west corner of the field.

There is a notable lack of any of the fine wares dating from the later 18th or 19th centuries, suggesting that by this time, either the night soil was no longer being put directly on to the fields, or that the fields were under pasture.



Figure 3: Finds distribution plot.

7. Conclusion

The fieldwalking survey has revealed a small concentration of heat-affected stones which may indicate prehistoric activity in the vicinity. The small amount of Romano-British pottery may relate to the Roman road of Rykniel Street which passes through the northern part of the site and the medieval pottery is suggestive of manuring during this period. The lack of post medieval and modern material, except for building debris (the majority of which probably originates from a modern derelict building located in the north-west corner of Field 15), suggests that either the fields have been pasture until recently or that night soil was no longer being put directly on to the fields.

8. Archive

The archive will be deposited with Derbyshire County Council under the Accession number DBYMU 2006-401.

9. Acknowledgements

The fieldwalking survey was carried out by the author and Leon Hunt. The pottery was identified by Nicholas Cooper. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

10. Bibliography

- Hunt, L., 2006 *An Archaeological Desk-based assessment for land at Highfield Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire* ULAS Report 2006-041
- ULAS, 2006 *Project Design for Fieldwalking: Land at Highfield Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire (SK 318 325)*. ULAS Specification 07-134-01

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Appendix 1. The pottery and miscellaneous finds report by N. Cooper

Site/Parish: Highfield Farm, Findern, South Derbyshire, SK 318 325 Accession No/ Doc Ref: DBYMU.2006- 401 Material: pottery & misc. finds Site Type: ploughed fields	Submitter: M. Hurford Identifier: N. Cooper Date of Id: 08/01/07 Method of Recovery: fieldwalking
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Small Find Number	Field number	Date	Description
1	3	Medieval	Medpot whiteware
2	3	Roman	Derbyshire Ware 2 nd/3rd
3	2	Medieval	Medpot
4	2	Roman	Greyware
5	16	Modern	Black glazed earthenware
6	16	Modern	Vitreous waste
7	16	Modern	Rooftile
8	16	Roman	Derbyshire Ware 2 nd/3rd
9	16	Modern	Black glazed earthenware
10	16	Modern	Rooftile
11	16	Modern	Rooftile
12	16	Medieval	Green glazed pot
13	16	Roman	Derbyshire Ware 2 nd/3rd
14	16	Medieval	Medpot
15	15	Roman	Derbyshire Ware 2 nd/3rd
16	15	Modern	Floortile
17	15	Modern	Floortile
18	15	Modern	Floortile
19	15	Modern	Rooftile
20	15	Medieval	Medpot whiteware
21	15	Modern	Soilpipe
22	15	Modern	Stoneware