

**An Archaeological Evaluation of
Land at Ravenstone Rd, Ibstock,
Leicestershire.**

NGR: SK 40554 11397
By Claire Brown



ULAS Report No 2018-033

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**An Archaeological Evaluation
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Leicestershire**

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Claire Brown

For: CgMS Heritage

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An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Ravenstone Rd, Ibstock Leicestershire.

Claire Brown

Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land west of Ravenstone Rd, Ibstock Leicestershire, (SK 40554 11397) from the 7th to 9th February 2018. Three trenches were excavated to evaluate the extent of a known Roman settlement in advance of a potential planning application. Two of the trenches contained archaeological features but the third, in the south of the site, was negative for archaeological deposits and confirmed that the settlement probably did not extend beyond the boundary of the feature identified in the geophysical survey. The features generally matched the results of a previous geophysical survey and comprised two ditches, one of which extended across two trenches, and a pit in the side of a trench containing a possible cremation urn containing a small quantity of burnt bone. The finds comprised a small quantity of late 2nd – 3rd century Roman pottery and a Roman coin. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under accession number X.A14.2018.

1. Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land off Ravenstone Rd, Ibstock, Leicestershire (SK 40554 11397) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) (Fig. 1).

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for an archaeological evaluation, with an assessment of the potential impact on buried archaeological remains from any groundworks associated with future development.

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological trial trenching, which took place between the 7th and 9th February, 2018. It follows a strategy for the work devised by CgMs and ULAS, which was set out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological evaluation of land off Ravenstone Rd, Ibstock Leicestershire (SK 40554 11397)* (Brown 2018).

2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

The proposed development area lies adjacent to the Ravenstone Road to the east, on the northern edge of the village of Ibstock, in North West Leicestershire (Figure 1 & Figure 2). The site, which comprises *c.*2 hectares of land, is roughly level with the road on the western boundary, which lies at a height of approximately 140m aOD. It had previously been levelled to provide hardstanding for a compound for building works, but which would have originally sloped gently down towards the south-west. For ease of understanding, although the settlement is orientated ESE-WNW- the compass points will be described as E-W and N-S in the text.

The British Geological Survey for England and Wales indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Tarporley Siltstone Formation – siltstone and mudstone sedimentary bedrock, overlain by alluvium.

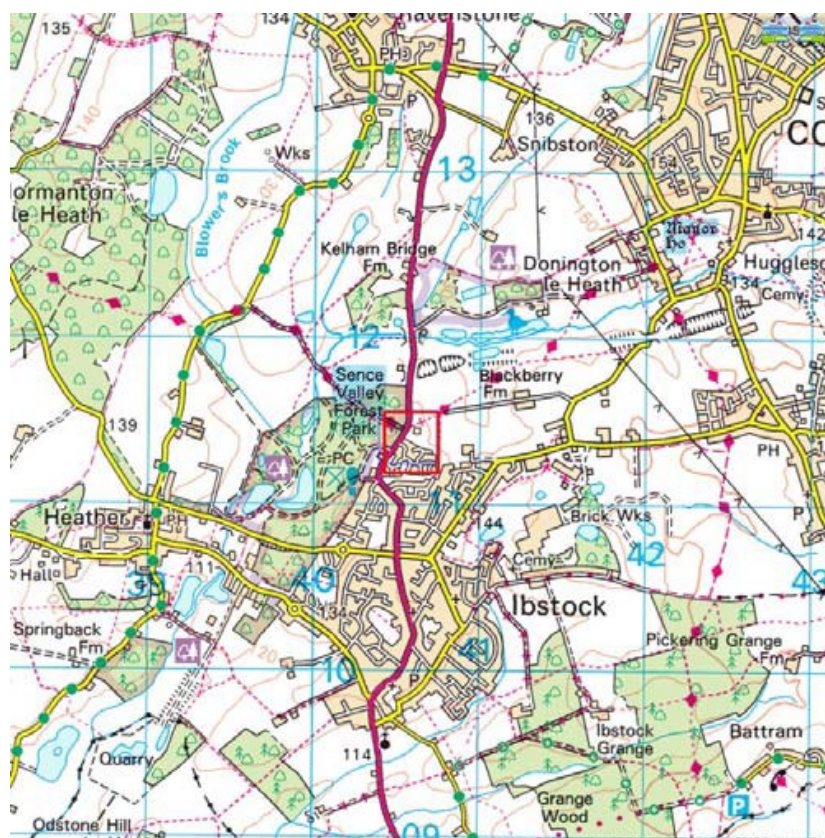


Figure 1: Site location plan

Reproduced from the Explorer 141 Kettering, Corby & surrounding area 1:20 000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 2005. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The assessment area is located outside the historic settlement core of Ibstock but on the south western margin of a Roman ladder settlement as shown by the geophysical magnetometry survey from 2013 (Hadrell 2013) - Figure 2. One of the southern boundary ditches of the settlement runs approximately north-west/south-east across the centre of the area to be investigated, with two north-south ditches also within the area.

Trial trenching carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (2012) on adjacent land to the south of the site in advance of a residential development revealed an early Iron Age pit alignment and boundary ditches thought to relate to the pits, a post medieval field boundary but no evidence of Roman or Iron Age settlement or industrial activity. Traces of ridge and furrow earthworks across the site indicate that the area formed part of the open field system during the medieval and post-medieval period. The OS maps for 1881, 1901 and 1927 show the area as being pasture/arable land which suggests little activity on the development site in the last few centuries (see Figure 3)

Trial trenching, comprising excavation of 29 trenches, was undertaken in December 2017 by PCAS (Report forthcoming) approximately 200m east of the site. The trenching confirmed the presence of the Roman settlement although limited additional archaeology was revealed beyond the extent of settlement shown on the geophysical survey.



Figure 2: Geophysical survey of area with arrow indicating southern boundary ditch of settlement extending across proposed site (outlined in yellow).

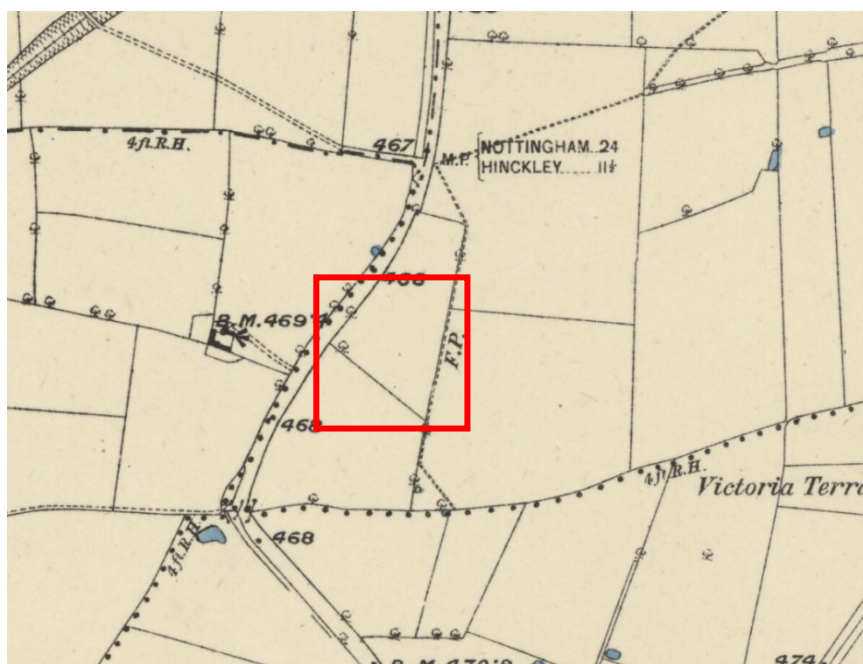


Figure 3: detail from 6" OS map dated 1881 XXIII SE showing the location of the site.

4. Aims and Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work are:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits.
- To record any archaeological deposits.
- 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 of the recording is 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 any proposed development on cultural heritage.

Research Aims

While the nature, extent and quality of archaeological remains within the areas of investigation for the project remained unknown until archaeological work was undertaken, it was possible to determine some initial objectives derived from *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight et al. 2012) and *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Cooper 2006). A Roman settlement site appears to extend into the trenching area and possible research aims that this evaluation could contribute to include:

Research Strategy 5.4: Rural Settlement patterns and landscapes

2. How and why did settlement forms and building traditions vary within the region and over time?
4. How did field and boundary systems relate to earlier systems of land allotment, and how did these boundary networks develop over time?
5. What patterns can be discerned in the location of settlements in the landscape?
6. Can we elucidate further the daily life of settlements and their role in the processing and marketing of agricultural products?

Research Objective 5H: Investigate the landscape context of rural settlements.



Figure 4: Development Area (pink) and proposed trench locations in red.



Scale 1:2,500

Magnetometer Survey Results Fig 3

Figure 5: Final trench location plan overlain on geophysical survey results.

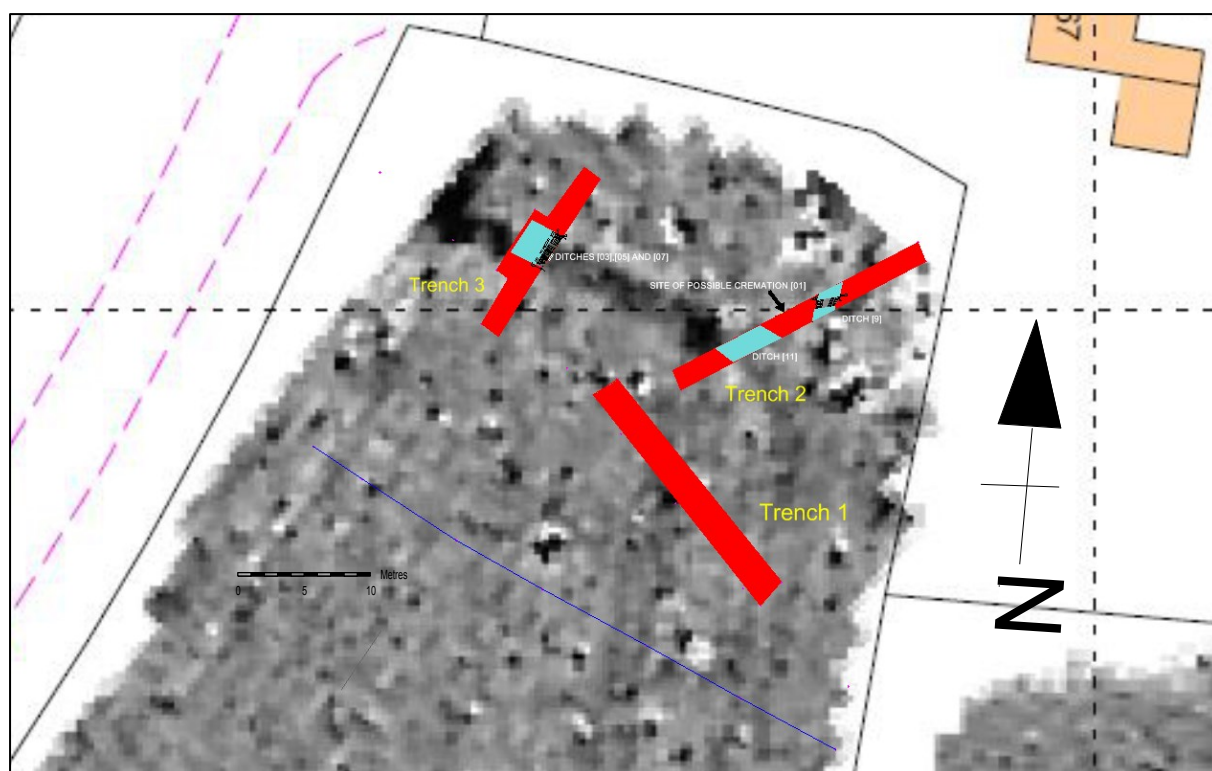


Figure 6: Detail of trenches and features

5. Methodology

Prior to any machining of trial trenches, general photographs of the site areas were taken.

The three trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The hard standing and concrete plus subsoil overburden were removed under full archaeological supervision until either the top of archaeological deposits or the natural undisturbed substratum was reached. Due to the constraints of the small site, the trench sizes were modified to allow access for the excavator whilst still targeting the features indicated on the geophysical survey (See Figure 4 & Figure 5). Also the positioning of Trench 2 was modified due to the presence of a hawthorne hedge, brambles and a metal Heras fence three meters in from the edge of the development site. Trenches were examined for archaeological deposits or finds by hand cleaning. The trenches were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and then were backfilled and leveled at the end of the evaluation.

The work followed the approved design specification (ULAS 2016) and adhered to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (2014).

6. Results

The topsoil across the site had been entirely removed when the site was turned into an area of hardstanding for the building works in the area adjoining the site in the south. It had been replaced by approximately 0.15m concrete and gravel and it is therefore not possible to establish the depth of the original topsoil. This is likely to have truncated the ditch features on

the site which despite their width were relatively shallow for boundary ditches. In Trench 3 for example, the cut of the ditch lay directly under this concrete/gravel layer with no intervening subsoil or topsoil.

The results of all excavated trenches are presented below in Table 1. Trench measurements are present in Appendix 1.

Table 1: Trench Summaries

Trench	Length (m)	Height of Trench base (m OD)	Natural Substratum	Notes	Min. depth to archaeology/natural (m)
1	c.19	0.60	Light orange yellow silty fine sand mixed with pebbles. Occasional patches reddish sandy-clay	Negative trench	0.40
2	c.21.5	0.58	Light orange yellow silty fine sand mixed with pebbles	Two ditches [09] and [11] and cut [01] with ceramic vessel containing burnt bone	0.41
3	c.14	0.75	Light orange yellow silty fine sand mixed with pebbles	Three ditches, Two parallel ditches, [03], [05] cut by a third, [07]	0.50

Trench 1

This trench was empty of archaeology with an area of reddish clay/sand at the east end (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Trench 1 from the south-east.

Trench 2

This trench was placed to target the southern boundary ditch of the Roman settlement to the north of the site shown in Figure 2. It was extended slightly to try and locate a second linear feature visible on the geophysical survey to the north. The southern boundary ditch [11] extended diagonally across the southern part of the trench (Figures 6 and 8) and also extended into Trench 3, where it was fully excavated and recorded. In Trench 2, the ditch was approximately 4.7m wide and with a fill of mid grey/brown silty sand. Although it was not excavated as it was a continuation of the intercutting ditches [03], [05], and [07] in Trench 3, a rapid section was excavated to look for dating evidence as none had been found in Trench 3.

A second ditch [09] matching the north-south anomaly on the magnetometry survey was present in the northern part of the trench. This was 1.30m wide and 0.4m deep and contained a small quantity of late 2nd – 3rd century Roman pot. At the base of the ditch, a 3rd century Roman radiate coin was recovered (Figure 19). The fill was dark brownish-grey with flint and pebble inclusions and charcoal flecks (Figure 10, Figure 9 and Figure 11). Slumped natural against the south-west section hints at a possible bank on this edge.



Figure 8: Trench 2 from the south-west showing position of Ditches [09] and [11]

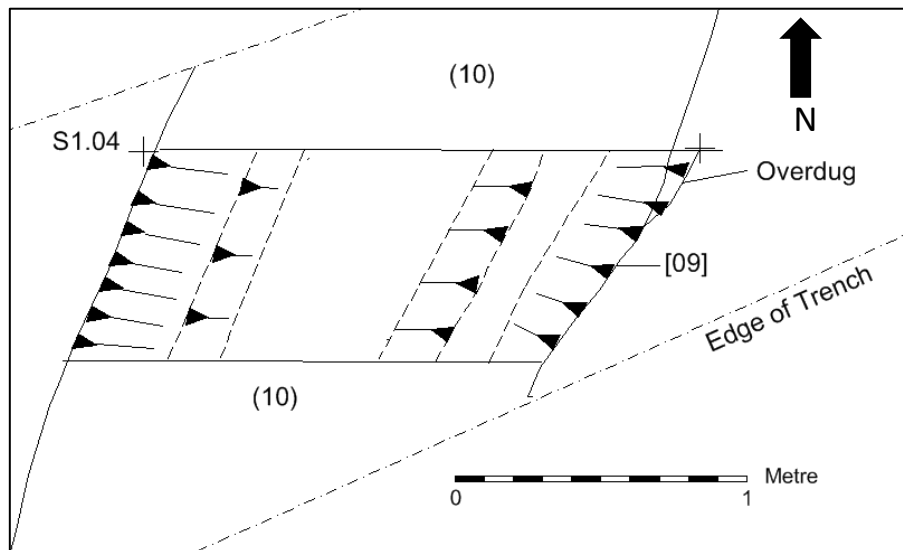


Figure 9: Plan of Ditch [09] in Trench 2

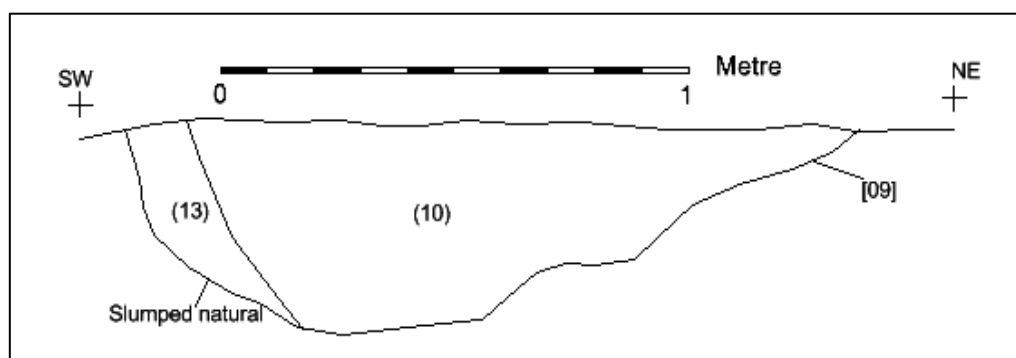


Figure 10: Section of Ditch [09] in Trench 2



Figure 11: Ditch [09] in Trench 2 looking north-east

In the side of the west section of Trench 2 was a ceramic vessel that contained a small amount of burnt bone that had been truncated by the machine while the trench was being opened (Figure 12) The pottery fabric was Derbyshire ware, and the small quantity of cremated bone it contained was too fragmented to ascertain if it was human or animal, although its placement in a ceramic vessel suggests that it is likely to be human. The vessel had been placed in a poorly defined pit [01] approximately 0.27m in diameter and 0.25m in depth between ditch [11] and [09] and perhaps at a point close to where they merge beyond the south side of the trench (Figure 13).



Figure 12: Part of a ceramic vessel containing burnt bone in the west side of Trench 2

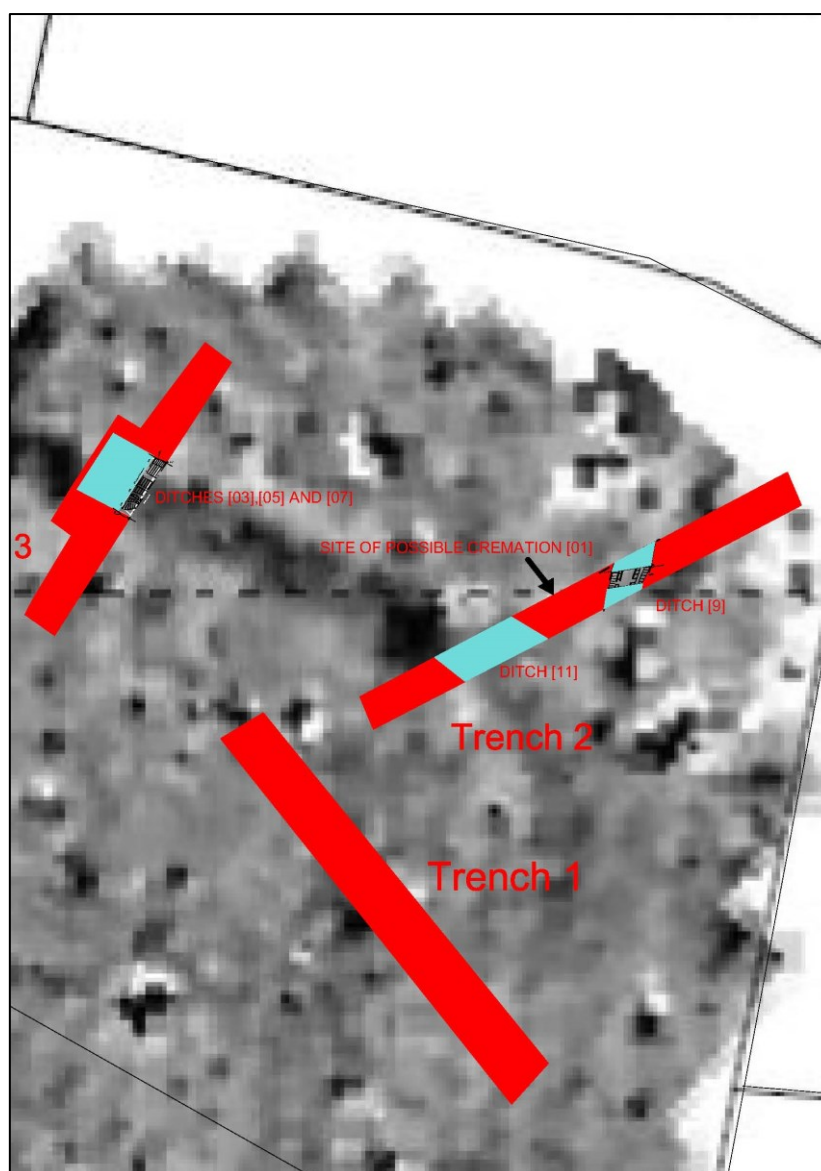


Figure 13: Close up of Trench 2 showing relationship of cremation (in side of trench) to ditch [11] and [09]

Trench 3

This trench contained one feature, the continuation of the southern boundary ditch of the Roman settlement that runs north-west to south-east across the site (Figure 5) and was the same ditch identified and previously discussed in Trench 2. The trench was widened by 1.60m to get the full width of the ditch (Figure 14) and to allow ease of access for excavation as it was anticipated to be of significant depth. Excavation through the feature suggested it comprised of three intercutting ditches, [03] and [05] both cut by a later ditch [07] (Figures 15-17).



Figure 14: Trench 3 from the south-west, widened at the point where the boundary ditches [03], [05] and [07] intersect with it.

A 0.60m slot was dug into the ditch to establish its dimensions and investigate its nature. It was 2m wide in total and 0.75m deep at its deepest point, although the original ditch may well have been much deeper and truncated by later activity on the site. The fill of both [03] and [05] was homogenous orange/brown silty sand with flint and small pebble inclusions. The fill of the later ditch, [07] was lighter in colour (orange/grey), less compact in composition and was saturated with water. None of the ditches produced any dating evidence. A second slot through the ditch in Trench 2 suggested a similar depth and profile but again produced no dating evidence.

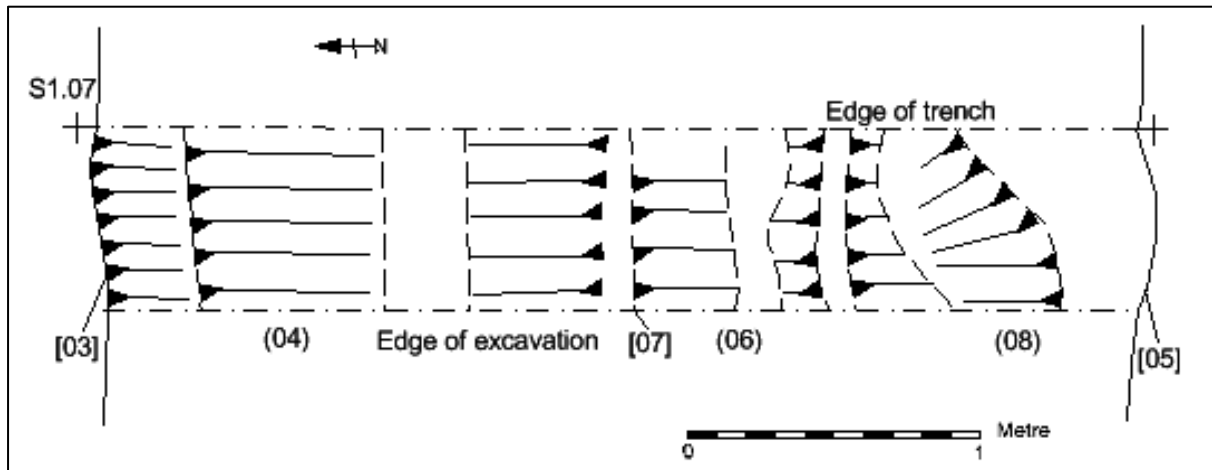


Figure 15: Plan of Ditches [03], [05] and [07]

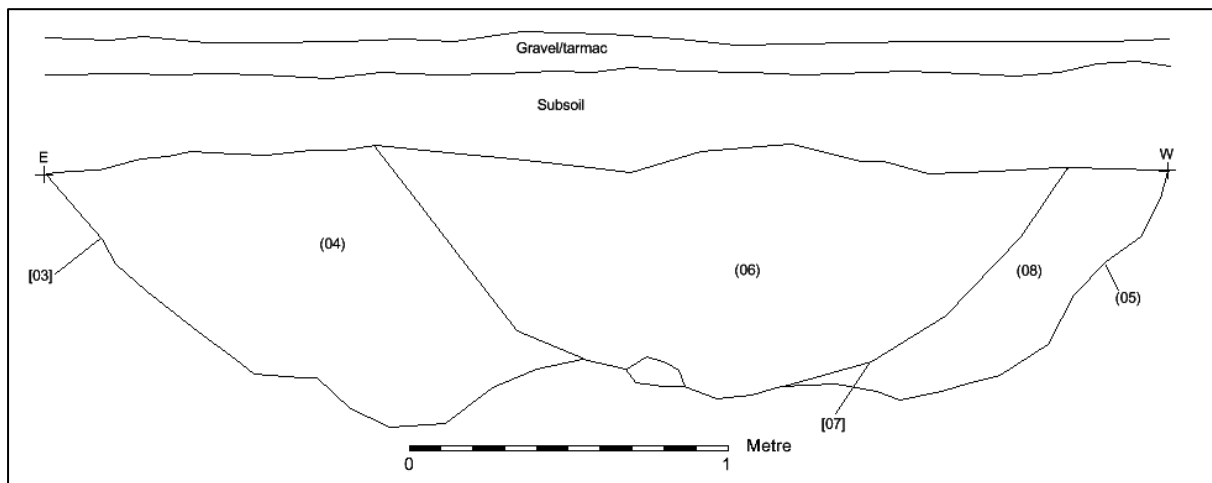


Figure 16: Section of ditches [03], [05] and [07] in Trench 3



Figure 17: Three intercutting ditches in Trench 3 [03] and [05] recut by [07]

7. Roman Cremation Vessel and other Roman pottery from Land at Ravenstone Rd, Ibstock, Leicestershire

Nicholas J. Cooper

Introduction

A total of 16 sherds (457g) of Roman pottery, from three vessels, were recovered from context [1] /1\, and (10). The material was classified using the Leicestershire Roman pottery form and fabric series (Pollard 1994, 110-114) and quantified by sherd count and weight. The full record is presented below (Table 2). The two sherds from boundary ditch fill (10) are abraded perhaps suggesting prolonged exposure on the ground surface before incorporation into the deposits. In contrast, the partially complete Derbyshire ware jar from [1], which contained calcined bone, is in good condition and would appear to still be a primary deposit, although vertically truncated by the digger as the trenches were excavated.

Results

Table 2: Quantified record of Roman pottery from the evaluation

Roman Pottery from Ravenstone Rd, Ibstock XA14.2018							
Cut	Context	Fabric	Form	Type	Sherds	Weight	Dating
1	Sf1 ?Crem	Derbys	Jar	Lid-seat	14	400	L2nd- M3rd
	10	GW5	jar	necked	1	32	L2nd-3rd
	10	GW6	misc	misc	1	25	L2nd-3rd
Total					16	457	

Discussion

Ditch fill (10) contained a hooked bead rim sherd from a necked jar in a sandy, slightly micaceous, grey ware (GW5) with a patchy dark grey slip on the surface, together with body sherd in a slightly coarser grey ware (GW6), again with patches of dark grey slip on the surface. Both vessels probably date to the later 2nd or 3rd century.

Broadly contemporary with this is the occurrence of what originally would have been a complete Derbyshire ware, lid-seated jar, with a campanulate rim. A full profile is constructible but only one third of the vessel is present. However, the fresh breaks suggest that the vessel was damaged shortly before discovery and not all of it recovered, perhaps being disturbed from its original location. The distinctive campanulate rim (Kay Type A; diameter 160mm based on 0.25 of the rim remaining) is slightly distorted suggesting the vessel was a 'second'. The form also appears slightly squatter than usual with a height of 175mm, a maximum girth of 180mm, and a base diameter of 80mm. The rim is not quite a well-formed and dished as those in vessels from the second half of the 3rd century, and so a date in the first half of the century is probably appropriate (Tyers 1996, 191). The fabric is oxidised orange throughout (Figure 18).

Calcined bone was recovered from the fill of the vessel, suggesting that it was used as a cremation urn, although without further analysis it is not clear if it is human or animal bone.



Figure 18: Pot and cremated bone.



Figure 19: Roman radiate coin from ditch [09] in Trench 2.

8. The charred plant remains from Land at Ravenstone Rd, Ibstock, Leicestershire

Adam Santer

Introduction

During an archaeological evaluation at this site, one sample was processed for the analysis of charred plant remains. The sample (sample 1) was from the fill (10) of a Roman boundary ditch [11] of late 2nd - 3rd century date. The fill also contained a 30g fragment of coal. 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 past diet, crop husbandry strategies and environment at the site.

Methodology

The sample consisted of a mid-brown silt 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

A total of nine items were found in the sample. Eight bedstraw seeds (*Galium aparine* L.) and one possible barley grain (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) were found in 7 litres of soil, which equates to 1.28 items per litre. The possible barley grain was very poorly preserved and this hindered identification to species. Charcoal fragments were also present in the sample, but none of these measured over 2mm in length (i.e. suitable for radiocarbon analysis). Modern rootlets were present in a large quantity as well as some modern seeds and insect remains. This is indicative heavy disturbance to the context.

Discussion

The cereal grain present in the sample likely represents residue from processing cereal grains for consumption or 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. In addition the fragment of coal could suggest the early use of local coal resources for burning.

Statement of potential

Due to the small sample size and fragmentary nature of the single cereal grain that was present, little information was gained as to diet, crop husbandry strategies and environment. The single piece of coal is similarly too small a sample to speculate further. However, if further work is undertaken, a suitable sampling strategy should be implemented.

8. The bone fragments from Land at Ravenstone Rd, Ibstock, Leicestershire

Jo Appleby and Phil Hartley

Introduction

During an archaeological evaluation, a small sample of calcined bone was recovered from a truncated vessel. The vessel comprised a Derbyshire ware, lid-seated jar and probably dates to the first half of the 3rd century

Results

A total weight of 22g of calcined bone was recovered from the vessel, with more probably having been lost when the cremation vessel was truncated by the mechanical digger. The majority of the fragments, weighing 13g, were between 5mm and 15mm in length, whilst six long bone fragments (9g) up to 50mm in length were also recovered.

The fragmented nature of the bone means that it is not possible to say definitively that the remains are human rather than animal, although, given the context, the former is most likely. No further analysis was possible.

9. Discussion and conclusions

The archaeological evaluation by trial trenching revealed evidence that the Roman settlement site extended into the development area in the form of boundary ditches also identified on the geophysical survey. The evidence suggests that the series of intercutting ditches that form the southern boundary [03], [05], [07] and [11] represent several episodes of ditch cutting delineating the southern margin of the settlement. The lack of archaeology in Trench 1 is consistent with the survey and might indicate that no associated features lie outside this southern ditch.

Although there is no dating for the southern ditch, the probable third century AD cremation deposit lies close to its edge and given how close it was to the surface, may represent a later act of closure as the ditches went out of use. Ditch [09] is dated by the coin and ceramic evidence to the late 2nd – 3rd century and is perhaps related to internal boundary demarcation.

There is no evidence of activity associated with buildings but the presence of a possible cremation and the presence of cereal residue, albeit a tiny sample from a hearth might suggest proximity to a settlement nearby.

Although only a small evaluation, the sequence of ditches forming the southern boundary of the settlement and the presence of the cremation possibly representing a closing deposit, means that the site has the potential to contribute towards the Research Agenda 5.4 *Rural settlement patterns and landscapes* particularly *How did field and boundary systems relate to earlier systems of land allotment, and how did these boundary networks develop over time?* The southern boundary had obviously been recut at least three times. Although the lack of any

dating evidence makes it hard to determine over what period it was in use, presumably it was a long enough time period for the ditches to have silted up and require re-excavating. Not enough evidence was recovered for any meaningful data to contribute towards 5.5 *The agricultural economy* or 5.6 *Artefacts: production, distribution and social identity*. The presence of a piece of coal hints at possible use of local resources and potentially industrial uses, however the small sample makes further interpretation difficult.

10. Archive

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire Museums Service, under accession no. X.A14.2018.

The site archive consists of:

- 1 Unbound A4 copy of this report
- 18 A4 Trench recording sheets
- 1 A4 Photo record sheet
- A4 Colour digital contact print 1 CD of digital photos

The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A14.2018.

11. Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York (Appendix 1). A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal, the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, in due course

12. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by the author Claire Brown and Sofia Picken, both of ULAS. Deputy Director Vicki Score managed the project.

OASIS data entry

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-275509		
	Project Name	An Archaeological Evaluation of Land off Ravenstone Road, Ibstock, Leicestershire.		
	Start/end dates of field work	07/02/2018-09/02/2018		
	Previous/Future Work	Geophysical Survey		
	Project Type	Evaluation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Area of hardstanding for building materials/vehicles		
	Monument Type/Period	Roman		
	Significant Finds/Period	Roman coin and possible cremation		
	Development Type	Residential		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning Application		
	Planning Ref.			
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Ravenstone Road, Ibstock, Leicestershire		
	Study Area	0.2ha		
	Site Coordinates	SK 40554 11397		
	Height OD	140m AOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (LCC) North West Leicestershire District Council		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Vicki Score		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Vicki Score		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	CgMS		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	LCC Mus Service	LCC Mus Service	LCC Mus Service
	ID (Acc. No.)	X.A14.2018	X.A14.2018	X.A14.2018
	Contents	None	Photos	Evaluation records Field Notes
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	An Archaeological Evaluation		
	Author	Brown, C		
	Other bibliographic details	ULAS Report No 2018-033		
	Date	07/02/2018-09/02/2018		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		
	Description	Developer Report A4 pdf		

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16/02/2018
v2 22/02/2018
V3 30/04/2018

14. Appendix 1 - Trench Measurements

Trench No	Orient		Length		Width		
1	E-W		19.10m		1.60m		
Interval	0m	5m	10m	15m	19.10m		
Subsoil 1	0.10m	0.15m	0.30m	0.15m	0.20m		
Subsoil 2	0.25m	0.30m	0.50m	0.33m	0.50m		
Top Natural	0.35 m	0.45m	0.70m	0.48m	0.70m		
Base of Trench	0.40m	0.45m	0.70m	0.48m	0.75m		

Trench No	Orient		Length		Width			
2	NE - SW		21.5m		1.60m			
Interval	0m	3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m
Subsoil 1	0.25m	0.20m	0.30m	0.25m	0.25m	0.40m	0.30m	0.27m
Subsoil 2	0.15m	0.30m	0.28m	0.24m	0.14m	0.10m	0.20m	0.14m
Top of Natural	0.35m	0.50m	0.58m	0.49m	0.39m	0.50m	0.50m	0.41m
Base of Trench	0.35m	0.50m	0.60	0.50m	0.45m	0.53m	0.55m	0.45m

Trench No	Orient		Length		Width		
3	N-S		14m		1.60m		
Interval	0m	3m	6m	9m	12m	14m	
Subsoil 1	0.30m	0.30m	0.25m	0.30m	0.32m	0.30m	
Subsoil.2	-	0.10m	0.40m	-	0.30m	0.20m	
Top of Natural	0.30m	0.40m	0.65m	-	0.62m	0.50m	
Base of Trench	0.38m	0.40m	0.65m	0.60m	0.62m	0.50m	

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