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Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation on land off Lower Moor Road, Coleorton,
Leicestershire, LE67 8FJ

NGR: SK 40329 17582

Claire Brown



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**For: Landmark Planning Ltd on behalf of Mr and Mrs D. Miles
Planning Authority: North-west Leicestershire District Council
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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation for land off Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire, LE67 8FJ (SK 40329 17582). This was commissioned by Landmark Planning Ltd on behalf of Mr and Mrs D. Miles.

Evaluation trial trenching was undertaken to fulfil the archaeological conditions of the planning permission for future residential development on the site (18/00386/VCU) in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. Four 20m trenches, were excavated between the 22nd-23rd November 2018.

Evidence for considerable truncation/disturbance within and around the site was recorded as a result of mining activity. No archaeological features or deposits were observed in any of the four trenches, largely due to the extent and depth of the mining activity and associated deposits, which reached a depth of over 2m in several of the trenches. It is very unlikely that archaeological features would have survived elsewhere on the site for the same reason.

The only artefacts to be recovered came from the topsoil and comprised modern 19th and 20th century pottery. The topsoil may have been imported from elsewhere when mining ceased and the field was returned to pasture.

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire Museums under the Accession Number X.A130.2018.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by Landmark Planning Ltd. on behalf of Mr and Mrs D. Miles to carry out an archaeological field evaluation on land off Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire.

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. The fieldwork was undertaken as a condition of planning permission for the construction of four dwellings on the site (18/00386/VCU). This was an initial phase of work intended to identify the character and extent of any heritage assets in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains could be assessed by the Planning Authority and a mitigation strategy developed.

This report presents the results of the programme of archaeological trial trenching, which took place in November 2018. It followed a strategy for the work devised by ULAS, which was set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for Land at Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire, LE67 8FJ (ULAS 2018).

Location and Geology

Coleorton is a small village situated 5km due east of Ashby de la Zouch in north-west Leicestershire. The site lies west of Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, directly opposite the Methodist church (Figs 1-2).

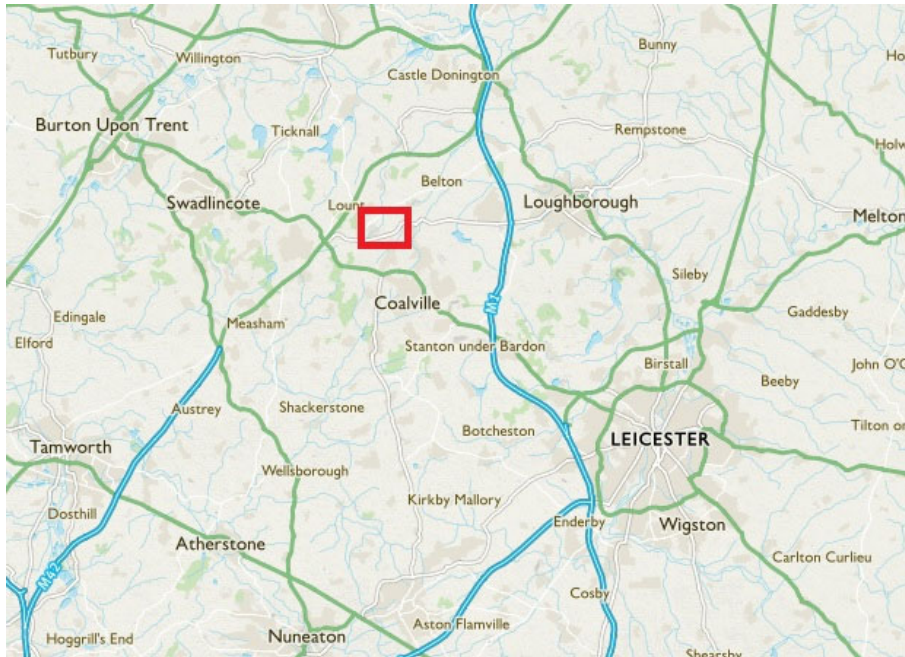


Figure 1: Site location (shown in red). Scale 1: 50 000

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Figure 2: Proposed development plan (provided by client).

The proposed area for development is currently 0.5ha and comprises a roughly triangular shaped area of scrubland, with an uneven topology and forms part of a larger field. The land slopes steeply away to the north and west. The extent of the development area was marked out to the north and west by wooden pegs by the client and was bounded on the south by a hedge and to the east by Lower Moor Road. The flatter area where the proposed housing will be built (and where the trenches were placed) was the highest area, at a height of approximately 106m aOD.

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the bedrock geology of the area is Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation – Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 310 to 318 million years ago in the Carboniferous period. The local environment was previously dominated by swamps, estuaries and deltas.

Historical and Archaeological Background

The site lies within the projected extent of the medieval and post-medieval historic settlement of Coleorton (HER ref: MLE10367). The site lies immediately to the east of the Designated Grade II* Registered Gardens of Coelorton Hall (DLE693, MLE4506), which were developed in the early 19th century by Sir George Beaumont. A series of designated earthworks and cropmarks located immediately to the west of the site are thought to relate to late medieval and post medieval coal workings (DLE7805), whilst a large dam and bypass channel located just to the south-west are thought to represent the site of a medieval mill (MLE4533). The WSI suggested that there was good potential for the presence of below ground deposits within the development area that relate to the medieval and post-medieval activity recorded nearby, which would have been affected by the current proposals. However, a mining survey report undertaken recently by the client indicated considerably more recent mining activity on the site that previously thought that only ceased in the late 1950's and which consisted of the mining

of five seams of coal at 50m-140m depth (The Coal Authority 2018). The survey also makes mention of coal workings on seams close to the surface at some time in the past but is unable to date the activity. This history of mining on the site would explain the disturbed/heavily truncated and coal rich nature of the subsoil, that extended in most trenches nearly two meters in depth.

The Northern mine research society states that ‘by the 1420’s the nearby village of Overton Saucy was sufficiently well-known as a supplier of coal to be renamed “Coal Overton” later shortened to “Coleorton”.

A large opencast mine at Coleorton – the ‘Lounge Site’ – operating from 1988-1994 produced a wealth of evidence of earlier mining activities, particularly from the late 15th century, when well-organised pillar and stall mines were being accessed by timber-lined shafts at depths of 30 meters or more below the surface. There was also much evidence from the 16th century, and some items from more recent times.’(Northern Mining Research Society 2018)

The Coal authority interactive map (2018)) shows Coleorton and specifically the Lower Moor Road area to be an area of where a mine entry had been identified as well as shallow coal mine workings and surface mining although there is no date mentioned for this activity.

Archaeological Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological work was:

- 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 recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results.
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets.
- To produce an archive and report any results.

Within the stated project aims identified in the WSI, 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 the proposed development on cultural heritage. While the nature, extent and quality of archaeological remains within the areas of investigation for the project were unknown until archaeological work was undertaken, some initial objectives were derived from East Midlands Heritage research agenda (Knight *et al.* 2012) accessible online. Relevant research objectives include:

Research Objective 6C - Review the evidence for developing settlement hierarchies; Research Objective 7E- Investigate the morphology of rural settlements;

Research Objective 7- Investigate the development of the open-field system and medieval woodland management.

In view of subsequent information regarding mining in the area, the research objectives in section 8F considering the development of East Midlands industry and its impact upon landscape and settlement morphology were added to the research objectives in particular - Identifying the landscape evidence for coalmining in the East Midlands.

Methodology

All work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (ULAS 2018) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct (2014a) and adhered to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2014b). An accession number/site code was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts.

Prior to any machining general photographs of the site areas were taken. The programme of work consisted of the excavation of four trenches measuring 20m x 1.6m and were distributed to target the footprint of the proposed houses and garages (Figs 3-4).

Excavation was carried out with a machine appropriate for the work (JCB 3CX ECO) fitted with 1.6m flat-bladed ditching bucket) to expose the underlying strata. The area was cleared of undergrowth and building rubble prior to the marking out of trenches. Topsoil and overburden were removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

Due to the depth of the made ground, three of the trenches were excavated to a depth of approximately 1m with the top of natural identified in several sondages across the trench.

Trench 3 was taken down to the top of natural for half of its length but as the eastern end contained significant depths of made ground, a sondage was excavated to identify the depth of the natural. All excavation by machine was undertaken with a view to avoiding damage to archaeological deposits or features while care was taken not to expose the archaeologist, the machine driver and members of the public to the unnecessary risks of exposure to deep excavations. All of the sondages were backfilled after being recorded.

The ULAS recording manual was used as a guide for all recording. Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. At least one longitudinal face of each trench was recorded. Trench locations were recorded by an appropriate method and then tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The trenches were then backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation.



Figure 3: Proposed trench plan taken from the WSI.

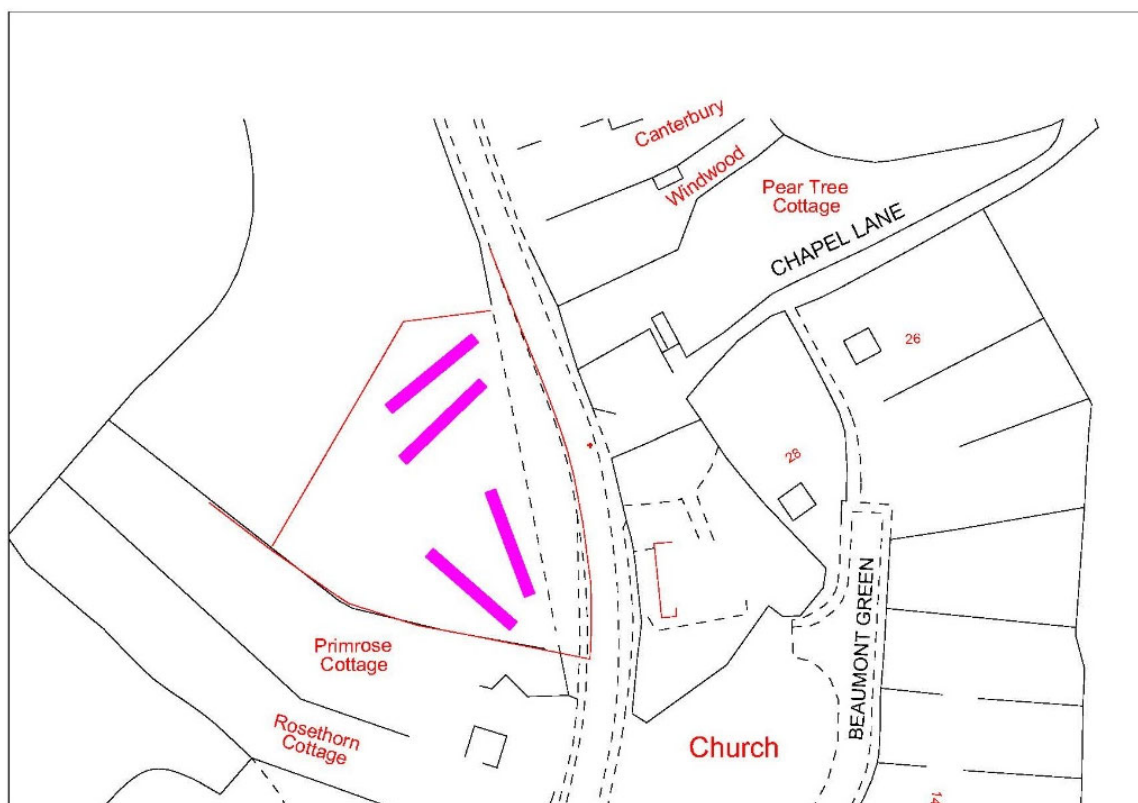


Figure 4: Final location of trenches.

Results

A total of four trenches were excavated between the 22nd and 23rd November 2018. These trenches measured approximately 20m x 1.6m. Three were located in areas where the houses would be situated and one covered the area for access.

The weather was cold and dry and conditions for the excavation were good. Prior to the start of the evaluation, the trench locations were set out using a tape measure to roughly locate the planned position of the trenches. However, the final position of the trenches was dictated by the overgrown and uneven nature of the ground and ease of access for machining (Fig. 4).

The topsoil was consistent across the site and comprised a dark-brown silt which contained <10% coal fragments, degraded ironstone, small stones and occasional modern debris such as brick fragments. The subsoil was very variable both in depth and consistency and was made up of seams of coal residue, redeposited clay, silt, degraded ironstone and sandstone and imported clay. The course components were coal, ironstone, and small sandstone and mudstone stones. The natural substratum was difficult to reach but several of the sondages where it was possible to reach it revealed it to be a creamy grey/yellow clay with degraded sandstone flecks.

Table 1: Trench Summary

Trench No.	Orientalion	Min. Depth	Max. Depth	Length of Trench	Width of Trench	Comments
1	NE-SW	0.85m	1.80m	20.00m	1.60m	Evidence of mining activity
2	NE-SW	0.76m	2.m	20.00m	1.60m	Evidence of mining activity
3	NW-SE	0.80m	>1m	20.00m	1.60m	Evidence of mining activity
4	N-S	0.90m	>2m	20.00m	1.60m	Evidence of mining activity

Trench 1 (Fig. 5)

Trench 1 was the northernmost trench on the proposed development site and orientated north-east/south-west. The subsoil at a depth of 0.20-0.30 included signs of industrial activity with bands of coal/coal dust and redeposited clay of different kinds intermixed with yellowish-grey substrate and so clearly 'made ground'. At a depth of 1m the natural substratum had still not been reached so it was decided to excavate a ditching-bucket-width sondage out of the trench to establish the depth of the natural (Fig. 6). At 1.80m the natural had begun to show through although still contained coal residue and it was decided to stop at this point. Two further sondages at approximately 5m intervals were dug to establish the depth of natural which was 1.8-2.0m deep (Figs 7 and 8). Each sondage was backfilled after being recorded for safety reasons. Portions of the north section of the trench were photographed to reveal the strata of coal and redeposited material (Figs 9 and 10)



Figure 5: Trench 1, Post-excavation, looking East. Scale 1m



Figure 6: Sondage 1 in west end of Trench 1 with south facing section. Scale, 1m



Figure 7: Sondage 2 in the middle of Trench 1 with south facing section. Scale, 1m



Figure 8: Sondage 3 in the east end of Trench 1 with south facing section. Scale, 1m



Figure 9: Coal seam in Trench 1, south facing section. Scale, 1m



Figure 10: South facing section in Trench 1 showing due to mining. Scale, 1m

Pottery fragments from the topsoil were modern in date including white bone china, but the topsoil might have been imported to level the site after mining ceased.

Trench 2 (Fig.11)

Trench 2 was parallel to Trench 1 and also ran north-east/south west. As with Trench 1, the subsoil was a composite of coal deposits and redeposited clays and two sondages were excavated to establish the depth of the natural. The first of these was over 2m deep before some natural started to show through but it was considered unsafe to continue further (Fig. 12). The second sondage reached good natural at 1.65m (Fig. 13).



Figure 11: Trench 2, Post-excavation, looking east. Scale 1m



Figure 12: Sondage 1 in Trench 2 at the west end with south facing section. Scale, 1m



Figure 13: Sondage 2 in Trench 2 with south facing section. Scale, 1m

Trench 3 (Fig. 14)

Trench 3 ran north-west to south-east and was moved slightly closer to the southern site boundary than shown in the WSI to allow access for the JCB between the trenches. The western half of the trench was taken down to a depth of 0.80m where natural clay was beginning to show through. No archaeological features were discovered. There was a clear change in the fill of the trench in the eastern end as once again mining activity was evident with bright yellow/orange redeposited clay. A sondage was excavated at the eastern end of the trench to establish the depth of natural here which was seen at 1.40m deep.



Figure 14: Trench 3: Looking east.



Figure 15: Sondage at east end of Trench 3, north facing section. Scale, 1m

Trench 4 (Fig. 16)

Trench 4 ran parallel to the road in a north-south orientation. As with the previous trenches, evidence of mining activity was immediately clear, and so the trench was excavated to a depth of approximately 1m and with three sondages excavated to establish the depth of the natural. The sondage at the southern end (Fig. 17) identified natural substrata at a depth of 1.45m and the sondage at the northern end (Fig. 19) was only 1.25m deep before natural was reached. However, the sondage in the middle of the trench (Fig. 18) had still not reached natural deposits by 2.20m deep and it was decided to stop digging at this point for safety reasons. The sides of the trench section of this sondage showed evidence of a possible coal extraction pit of unknown depth and dimension, or possibly it might perhaps have been a mine shaft entrance.



Figure 16: Trench 4, looking south.



Figure 17: Sondage in south end of Trench 4, east facing section. Scale, 1m



Figure 18: Sondage in the middle of Trench 4 with west facing section. Scale, 1m



Figure 19: Sondage in the north end of Trench 4 with west facing section. Scale, 1m

Conclusion

The archaeological evaluation undertaken on 22nd and 23rd November 2018 by University of Leicester Archaeological services revealed significant evidence of mining activity on the site of the proposed residential development. The ground had been extensively disturbed and it is likely that even the topsoil had been imported in to level the ground after mining operations finished at the end of the 20th century. Given the depth of made ground and redeposited material any archaeology in this area is unlikely to have survived.

This workings evident on this site probably date to the 19th-20th century and it is possible that the late 19th century housing nearby and the Methodist church opposite built at the turn of the century are directly related to coal extraction in the area, and good road and railway networks would have facilitated the growth of the coal industry at Coleorton.

Archive

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession No. X.A130.2018.

The archive contains:

- 1 x A4 report
- 1 x Trench summary index sheet
- 4x Trench recording sheets
- 1 x Digital photo index
- 1 x Digital photo sheet

Publication

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 project was managed by John Thomas, the fieldwork was undertaken by Claire Brown.

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Appendix 1: OASIS data entry

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	Universil-336115		
	Project Name	Land off Lower Moor Road, Coleorton		
	Start/end dates of field work	Start:22/11/2018, End 23/11/2018		
	Previous/Future Work	No		
	Project Type	Evaluation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Pasture/waste land		
	Monument Type/Period	None		
	Significant Finds/Period	None		
	Development Type	Residential		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
	Planning Ref.	18/01237/REM		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Land off Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire, LE67 8FJ		
	Study Area	0.5 Hectares		
	Site Coordinates	SK 40329 17582		
	Depth	106m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (North-West Leicestershire District Council)		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	V.Score and J. Thomas		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Claire Brown		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Mr and Mrs D Miles		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	n/a	Leicestershire Museums Service	Leicestershire Museums Service
	ID (Acc. No.)		XA130 2018	XA130.2018
	Contents			Trench recording sheets, photo record sheets, general notes, unpublished report
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	An Archaeological Evaluation on land off Lower Moor Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire LE67 8FJ		
	Author	C. Brown		
	Other bibliographic details	ULAS Report no: 2018-197		
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