

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Forge Field to the rear of 5 Market Place,
Billesdon, Leicestershire.
*NGR: SK 718 028***

Andrew Hyam
May 2005

*Planning Application Ref: 04/1486FUL
Client: Sandhurst Builders Ltd, on behalf of
Mr and Mrs G. Jeffery*

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**An Archaeological Excavation Forge Field to the rear
of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire (NGR SK 718 028).**

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by ULAS for Sandhurst Builders working on behalf of Mr and Mrs G Jeffery in advance of proposed residential development on Forge Field to the Rear of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire, planning application: 04/1486FUL. The work was carried out in May 2005 and comprised the excavation of three 20m x 1.5m evaluation trenches located to target the proposed house footprints and an area of possible medieval earthworks.

The proposed development site for five new dwellings lies to the rear of property fronting onto Market Place in the historic core of the medieval village of Billesdon. Prior to the development work the land was occupied by gardens and a small orchard with a small range of 19th century buildings along the south west of the plot. Number 5 Market Place lies to the south east.

A number of shallow postholes, pits and linear features were located in each trench but with little dating evidence. Some early medieval and post medieval pottery was recovered along with a single piece of heavily abraded Roman greyware.

Records and archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services, accession number X.A.47.2005

1. Introduction

The proposed development site is located at the rear of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire (NGR: SK 718 028) (figs. 1 and 2). Forge Field (the site) covers an area of approximately 0.25 ha on which will be erected five new dwellings with garages, a new access to the south east of the site will also be constructed. No. 5 Market Place, as its name suggests, fronts onto Market Place which indicates that it lies near to the core of the medieval village. This mid 19th century building is Grade II listed and will not be affected by the development. Low earthworks were identified in the desk-based assessment in the northern part of the site as either medieval house platforms or post-medieval garden features. There is also a noticeable depression near to the north-east side of the site. SMR evidence also revealed the presence of a number of medieval features nearby. Because of this archaeological potential, following an application for the development work, the Historic and Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council on behalf of the Harborough District Council planning authority recommended that an archaeological evaluation should take place in the form of trial trenching in order to assess any archaeological impact. Consequently University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Sandhurst Builders Limited, on behalf of Mr and Mrs G. Jeffery, to carry out the archaeological evaluation.

2. Geology and Topography

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 156 indicates that the geology of the area is likely to consist of Upper Lias clay. The site is situated on a south easterly facing slope rising approximately five metres from 170.64m OD at its lowest point immediately to the rear of Number 5.

Private properties bound the north and western sides of the site and a narrow lane leading from Market Place follows the south western edge. The lane is at a slightly lower level than the site and may indicate the remains of a slight hollow way or that the site has seen a build up of material at some stage.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

Although no archaeological sites or features have previously been noted on the site, it is more likely to be due to lack of earlier archaeological investigation rather than a true absence of evidence. As previously mentioned, the SMR records a number of medieval features close to the site which is itself within the core of the somewhat shrunken medieval village.

Place name evidence suggests that the origins of Billesdon pre-date the Norman Conquest. The Domesday Book records an exclusively agricultural village which appears to have remained this way until the late 18th century. At this time a limited framework knitting industry grew up followed by brick making after 1846. By the 1950s both of these industries had declined and the village returned to its original agricultural activities. The market place has a 14th century cross standing in the eastern side but the origins of the market are thought to be much earlier.

4. Aims and Objectives

The principal aims of the archaeological evaluation were to ascertain whether any significant archaeological remains or deposits were present within the development area. If any were identified a sufficient sample to establish their extent, date, quality, character, form and potential including environmental data was to be recorded. It was recognised that further archaeological recording may be required in the light of the results of this evaluation programme.

5. Methodology

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (1999)*.

Prior to the evaluation work the site consisted mainly of a lawned garden, with a number of trees, especially in the north. The client deturfed the area of each trench which had previously been laid out by Sandhurst Builders Ltd. Due to accessibility problems for a JCB sized machine all work was undertaken using a mini-excavator.

Trial trenching totalling c. 90 sq metres (three 20m x 1.5m trenches) was proposed in order to provide a representative sample of the development area. They were located

to target the proposed house footprints and the area of possible earthworks along the north-western boundary whilst taking into account the location of a number of trees in this part of the site.

Topsoil and subsoil were removed in spits by machine fitted with a flat-bladed ditching bucket under archaeological supervision until archaeological deposits or undisturbed natural substrata were encountered. Spoil was stored on tarpaulins adjacent to each trench in order to minimise damage to the remaining lawns.

Any archaeological deposits located were hand cleaned and planned as appropriate in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the evaluation. Samples of any archaeological deposits located were hand excavated. Measured drawings of all archaeological features were then prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into the overall site plan.

All excavated sections were recorded and drawn at 1:10 scale, levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights were taken as appropriate at each feature and along each trench.

6. Results

Stratigraphy

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the north west of the site parallel to the boundary and across the earthworks (fig 3). A small number of apple trees were laid out in lines following a similar orientation and the trench was excavated between these both to avoid root damage and to avoid any deposits that may have been disturbed by root action. The trench line ran across the southern edge of the earthworks which had a distinct dip half way across (plate 1). The topsoil (context 1), which was the same across the whole site was a dark brownish grey silty loam on top of a mid grey brown silty clay subsoil (context 2). The maximum depth to the natural substratum was 0.74m where the earthworks were at their most prominent. This depth however was mostly due to a greater thickness of topsoil rather than a cut into the natural. The underlying natural substrata across Trench 1 was divided into two distinct areas: to the east was an orangey brown clayey sand, to the west was a heavier light yellow-brown clay (fig 4).

Trench 2

Trench 2, along the western boundary of the site, was located in order to assess the impact of the houses to be built in this area (fig 3). The ground sloped down quite steeply from north west to south east, dropping approximately 0.9m along its 20m length (plate 2). The lane, to the south west of Trench 2, was slightly lower than the current ground level around this trench. Excavation down to the natural substrate was significantly deeper in this trench than in the other two. This was caused by a much deeper layer of subsoil. Topsoil and subsoil were the same as in Trench 1 and were allocated the same context numbers in all three trenches. The maximum depth to natural from ground level, seen at its southernmost end, was 0.98m rising slightly to 0.63m at the northern end. The same orange brown clayey sand natural substrate was seen in this trench along with an area of light yellowy-brown silty clay in the north.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was set out along the north eastern side of the site following a north west to south east direction (fig 3). A small depression could be seen at the southern end of the trench which extended eastwards towards the edge of the site. Again the trench sloped from north to south dropping approximately 1.2m. The topsoil and subsoil were the same as in the previous two trenches. The depth from ground level to the natural substrate was quite consistent along the length of the trench rising from 0.66m at its deepest to 0.54m at its most shallow point. Light yellow-brown silty clay natural was seen along its entire length.

Archaeological deposits

Trench 1

Very little evidence for the cause of the earthworks could be seen that would link it with any medieval activity. The interface between the subsoil and natural substrata dipped down slightly along with a corresponding rise in the thickness of the topsoil half way along the trench but no features could be seen cutting into the natural. The dip seen in the ground level (plate 1) was simply a thickening of the topsoil depth.

A shallow linear gully [4] was observed running from the north-west to the south-east across the trench (fig 4). Its eastern edge was well-defined but the western edge was very difficult to define and may have been disturbed by tree root activity. It contained a mid brownish grey silty clay fill (3) but no finds were recovered that would enable a date to be allocated. The only other feature observed in Trench 1 was a small posthole [6] located to the west of gully [4]. This had a mid grey-brown silty clay fill (5) from which no finds were recovered.

Trench 2

Three archaeological features were noted in this trench. At the southernmost end a shallow, irregularly-shaped pit [8] was seen extending out from the western edge of the trench. It appeared to be quite truncated and contained a pale orange-brown sandy-silty clay fill (7) from which a single highly abraded sherd of grey ware was recovered. Further north a larger more irregular pit [16] spread across the width of the trench. Its southern side had been badly disturbed by what appeared to be root activity. It had a mid yellowy-brown sandy-silty clay fill (15) containing a single small fragment of animal bone but no pottery. A more substantial gully or ditch [18] ran across the width of the trench from east to west. It was approximately 1m wide and 0.5m deep with a vee-shaped profile. Its fill (17) consisted of a light grey-brown sandy-clay with a small fragment of animal bone forming the only find.

Trench 3

A number of features were observed in this trench including the edge of a clay pit that was excavated to serve the 19th century local brick-making industry. The excavated edge of the pit coincided exactly with the earthwork observed before the commencement of this evaluation work (plate 3). The fill was a dark brown mixed

silty-clay with lots of brick and slate fragments. The location of this clay pit was already known about by the owner and this excavation served to confirm this.

Running along the eastern side of the trench was a probable gully [12] which had been cut by the clay pit. Only part of the gully was visible as its east edge extended beyond the limits of the evaluation trench. It had a dark grey-brown silty-clay fill containing two small sherds of early medieval Stamford ware pottery and fragments of bone. A small posthole [14] cut the edge of gully [12]. 0.5m south of this was a similar posthole [10]. Both had a dark grey brown silty clay fill but no dateable finds.

A small quantity of post medieval and modern pottery was recovered from the topsoil during excavation of all three trenches.

7. Discussion

The small number of archaeological features located during this evaluation indicate that a limited amount of activity has taken place. Unfortunately, assigning phases is difficult due to the lack of finds in most of the features. It remains unclear as to the origins of the earthwork in the north of the site. Evidence so far points more towards post medieval garden activities rather than medieval house platforms. The gully found in Trench 1 may be a property or plot boundary as it lies almost in the centre of the site and appears to bisect it (although the southern limit is not known). Gully [13] in Trench 3 may perform a similar function as it is on a similar alignment. It is difficult to state the function of gully [18] in Trench 2 although it may be reasonable to expect that it has some relationship with the nearby lane. It is also roughly parallel to the existing property line formed by the south east site boundary.

As only three postholes were found during the evaluation it is not possible to state whether these form part of any structures. The very nature of trial trenching means that it is unusual to uncover posthole alignments using this method. The lack of dating evidence also means that we cannot be sure if they are contemporary to one another or to any other features.

The two shallow pits in Trench 2 are interesting in that the single piece of grey ware was found in pit [8] although this is heavily abraded and is likely to have spent a deal of time in the soil before being deposited in this feature. As no other finds came from these two pits no further judgement can be made on the relative dates.

8. Conclusion

Overall the evaluation has revealed a picture of small-scale activity possibly with the site being sub-divided into smaller plots at some stage. It would appear that the earthworks within Forge Field are not medieval and date to the post medieval period, this is certainly true in the case of the clay pit. In all likelihood any domestic structure which may have occupied the site were located further south-east towards Market Place and along the southern corner.

It is interesting that so few finds were recovered even though the site is within, or close to, the village core. The Stamford ware pottery, despite only two sherds being found, shows that Billesdon was probably a relatively quiet village utilising locally traded resources.

9. Archive

The archive consists of site notes, sketches, photographs and finds to be held by the Historic and Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council under accession number X.A.47.2005

10. Publication

A summary of the evaluation work will be prepared for publication in the *Transactions of The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course.

11. Bibliography

An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment for a proposed Residential Development at Forge Field to the rear of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire. ULAS report 2004/164

University of Leicester Archaeological Services Design Specification for Archaeological Excavation. for a proposed Residential Development at Forge Field to the rear of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire.

Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain. Sheet 156.

Ordnance Survey Landranger map 141 Kettering, Corby and surrounding area.

12. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by Andrew Hyam and Steve Baker. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

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Appendix 1

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for archaeological evaluation

Proposed Residential Development,
Forge Field to the rear of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire (SK 718 028)

Planning Application: 04/1486FUL

For: Sandhurst BuildersLtd, on behalf of Mr. & Mrs. G, Jeffery

1. Definition and scope of the specification

1.1 This specification is for archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in advance of proposed residential development for land known as Forge Field, to the rear of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire (SK 718 028; Figs. 1-2).

1.2 It addresses part of the requirements for an archaeological impact assessment for Charnwood Borough Council following Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning), para.30, as expressed in the *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* issued by the Historic and Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council on behalf of the planning authority, Harborough District Council.

1.3 All archaeological work will adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* and the *Guidelines and procedures for archaeological work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicestershire County Council., Heritage Services).

2. Background

2.1. The proposed development site is located at the rear of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire (SK 718 028; figs.1 and 2). It consists of an area of c.0.25 ha within which it is proposed to construct five new dwellings with garages and new access. The Leicestershire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) indicates that the site is located within the medieval core of the village of Billesdon (**LE8911**). In addition, five medieval sites have been located within 300m of the development area (**LE1212**, **LE1220**, **LE1222**, **LE1223** and **LE10226**) and two post-medieval sites are located within 310m (**LE1216** and **LE10227**). Earthworks are located along the northwest boundary of the site, although it is not clear as to whether they are medieval house platforms or post-medieval garden features

3. Objectives

3.1 The objective of the archaeological work is to ascertain whether any significant archaeological remains are present within the area to be developed. If identified a sufficient sample to establish their extent, date, quality, character, form and potential including environmental data will be recorded. Further archaeological recording may be required in the light of the results of this programme.

4 General Methodology

4.1 All work will follow the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations.

4.2 Staffing, recording systems, Health and Safety provisions and insurance details are provided.

4.3 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the sites from the project manager. These will ensure that project targets are being met and professional standards are being maintained. Provision will be made for external monitoring meetings with the client and Leicestershire County Council. The strategy will be reviewed in the light of the quality of the archaeological resource as revealed at different stages of the fieldwork.

4.4 The site is currently a lawned garden, with a number of trees. The client is to deturf the area of each trench. Due to inaccessibility to a JCB, machining will be by mini-excavator.

4.5 Trial trenching

4.5.1 Trial trenching totalling *c.* 90 sq metres (three 20m x 1.5m trenches) is proposed to provide a representative sample of the development area. They have been located to target the proposed house footprints and the area of possible earthworks along the north-western boundary. The location may be varied according to any constraints on the availability of the area for trenching.

4.5.3 The area will be scanned by a CAT scanner to verify the location of services (Fig.3). Following this, topsoil will be removed in spits by machine with a flat-bladed ditching bucket under archaeological supervision until archaeological deposits or undisturbed natural substrata are encountered. Every effort will be made to ensure that spoil is stockpiled neatly on tarpaulins to avoid unnecessary damage to lawned areas and trenches will be located to avoid damaging tree roots..

4.5.4 The location of the trenches will be surveyed using a Total Station Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) linked to a Psion hand held computer.

4.5.5 Any archaeological deposits located will be hand cleaned and planned as appropriate to addressing the aims and objectives of the evaluation. Samples of any archaeological deposits located will be hand excavated. Measured drawings of all archaeological features will be prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100. All plans will be tied into the National Grid using an Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM).

4.5.6 Particular attention will be paid to the potential for buried palaeosols in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer. Deposits which may provide radiocarbon dating evidence will be sampled.

4.5.7 All excavated sections will be recorded and drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 scale, levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights will be taken as appropriate.

4.5.8 Any human remains encountered will not normally be excavated as part of the evaluation process. However, if the remains are considered to be vulnerable to disturbance and it is considered desirable that they are excavated, this will only be done with the consent of the planning archaeologist, with a Home Office Licence and in compliance with relevant environmental health regulations.

4.6 Mitigation Strategy

4.6.1 Depending on the results of the trial trenching and following consultation with the County Archaeologist mitigation strategy may need to be formulated.

5 Recording Systems

5.1 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets.

5.2 A site location plan based on the current Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map, enlarged to 1:500 (reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO) will be prepared. This will be supplemented by a plan at 1:200 (or 1:100), which will show the location of the areas investigated.

5.3 Some record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made on drawing film, related to the OS grid and at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. Elevations and sections of individual layers of features should be drawn where possible. The OD height of all principal strata and features will be calculated and indicated on the appropriate plans.

5.4 An adequate photographic record of the investigations will be prepared. This will include black and white prints and colour transparencies illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation undertaken.

5.5 This record will be compiled and fully checked during the course of the excavation.

5.6 All site records and finds will be kept securely.

6 Report and Archive

6.1 A report on the fieldwork will be provided following analysis of the records and materials.

6.2. The copyright of all original finished documents shall remain vested in ULAS and ULAS will be entitled as of right to publish any material in any form produced as a result of its investigations.

6.3 A full copy of the archive as defined in the 'Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage' (UKIC 1990), and Standards in the Museum care of archaeological collections (MGC 1992) and 'Guidelines for the preparation of site archives and assessments for all finds (other than fired clay objects) (RFG/FRG 1993) will be presented to an appropriate registered museum within six months of the completion of fieldwork. This archive will include all written, disk-based, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

7. Timetable and staffing

7.1. The trial trenching will be undertaken within a one week period and can commence during the week beginning 2.5.05.

8. Health and Safety

8.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Statement of Safety Policy and uses the Standing Committee of Archaeological Unit Managers (SCAUM) manual, as revised in 1997, as its Health and Safety Manual with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate. All ULAS staff will follow the site contractors' Health and Safety policy.

9 Insurance

9.1 All ULAS work is covered by the University of Leicester's Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance. The Public Liability Insurance is with Gerling Insurance Services Policy No. 62/99094/D, Risk Reference LT 35101 while the Professional Indemnity Insurance is with Sun Alliance Insurance Policy No. 03A/5A 001 05978, Risk Reference LT 27229.

10. Bibliography

George, S., 2004 *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment for a Proposed Residential Development at Forge Field to the rear of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire (SK 718 028)* ULAS Report 2004-164

MAP 2, *The management of archaeological projects* 2nd edition English Heritage 1991

MGC 1992, *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museums and Galleries Commission)

RFG/FRG 1993, *Guidelines for the preparation of site archives* (Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group AD 700-1700)

SMA 1993, *Selection, retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections. Guidelines for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (Society of Museum Archaeologists)

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Appendix 2

Figures and plates.

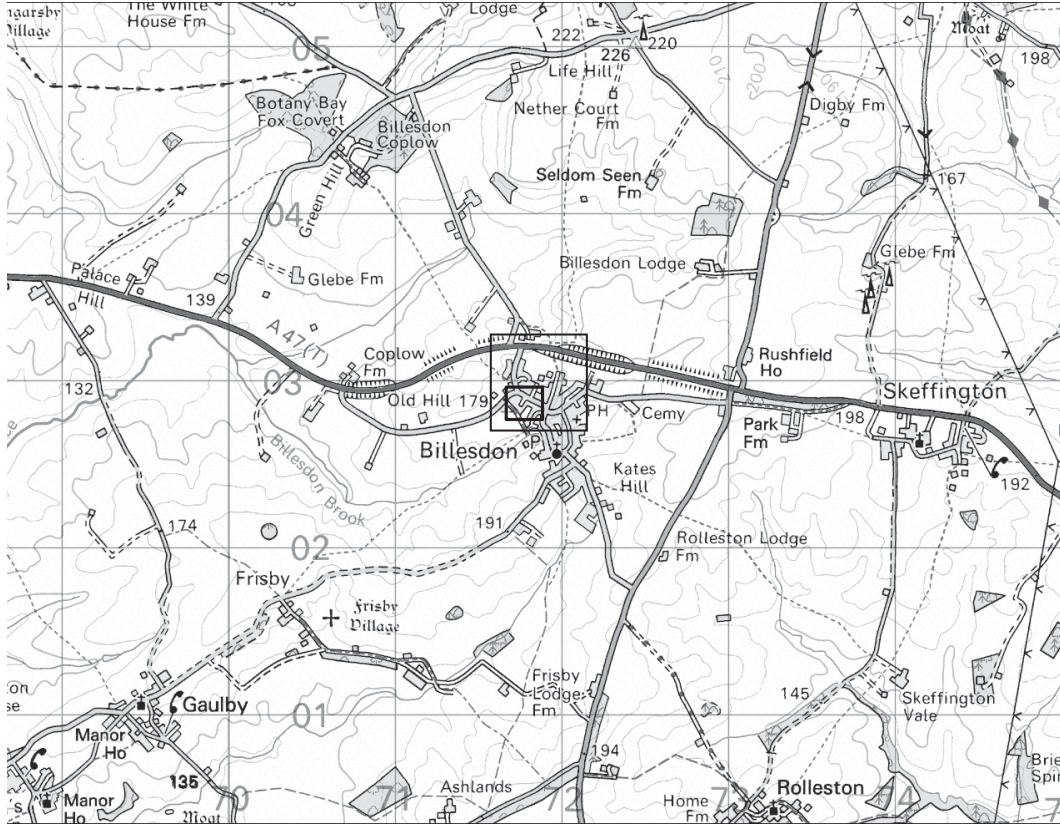


Fig. 1 Site location Original scale 1:50000

Reproduced from the OS map Landranger 141 Kettering, Corby and surrounding area 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10002186.

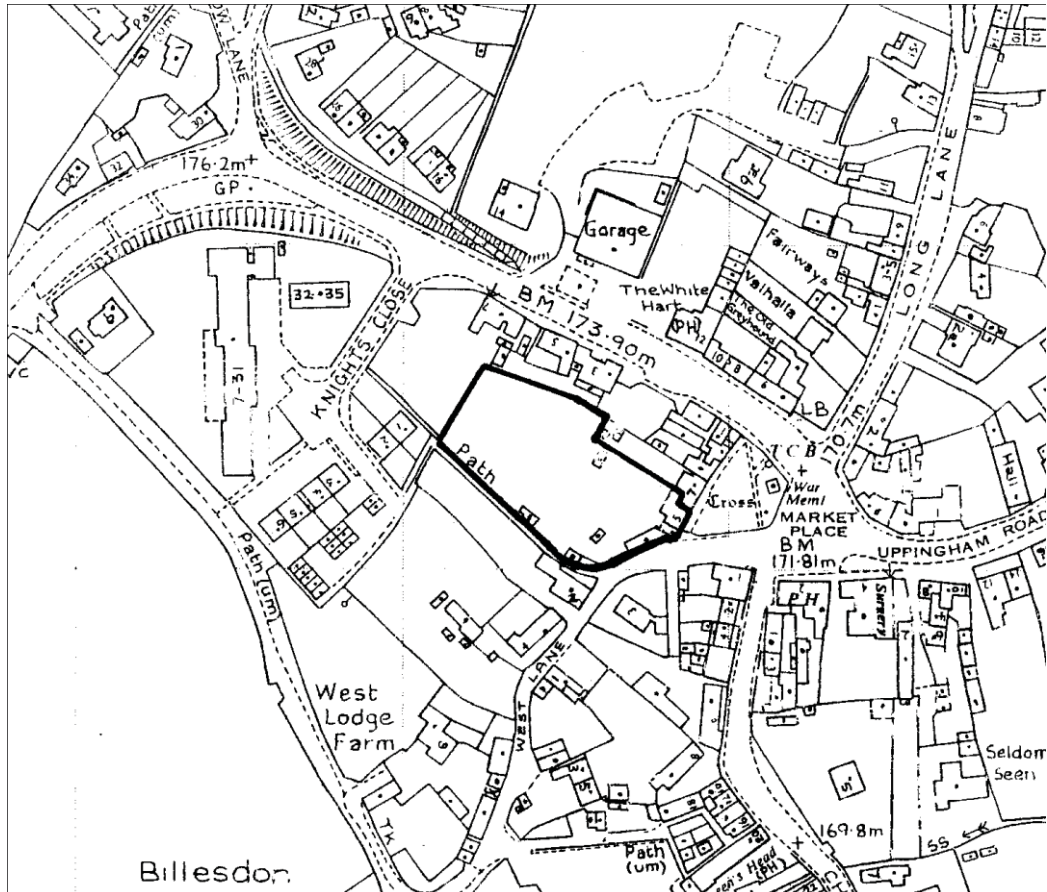


Fig. 2 1978 OS map Leicestershire SK 7102 with development area outlined (Scale 1:2500)
Reproduced from the OS map Leicestershire SK 7102 1:2500 map by permission of Ordnance Survey
on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1978. All rights
reserved. Licence number AL 10002186.

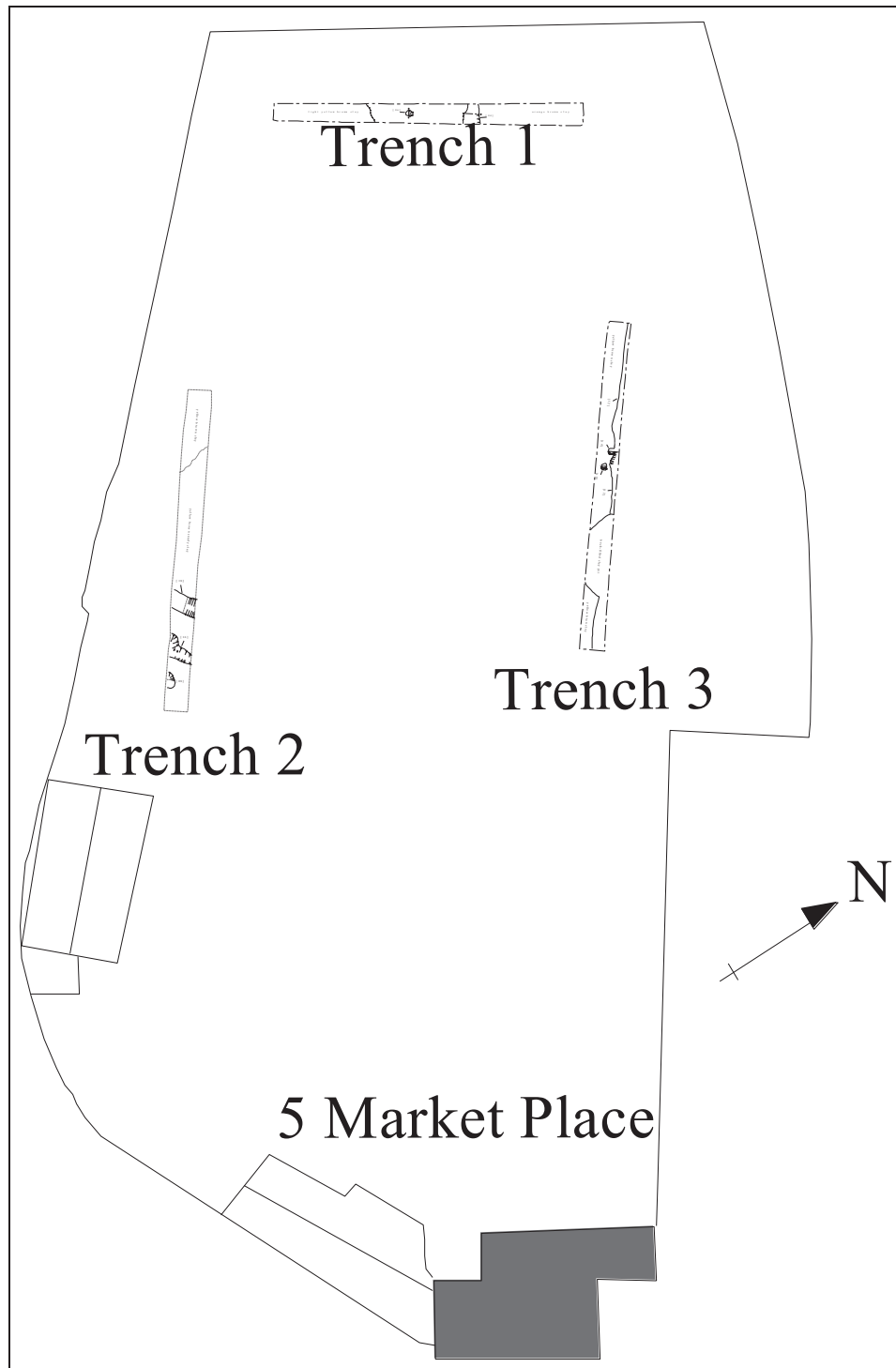


Fig 3. Location of evaluation trenches at Forge Field.

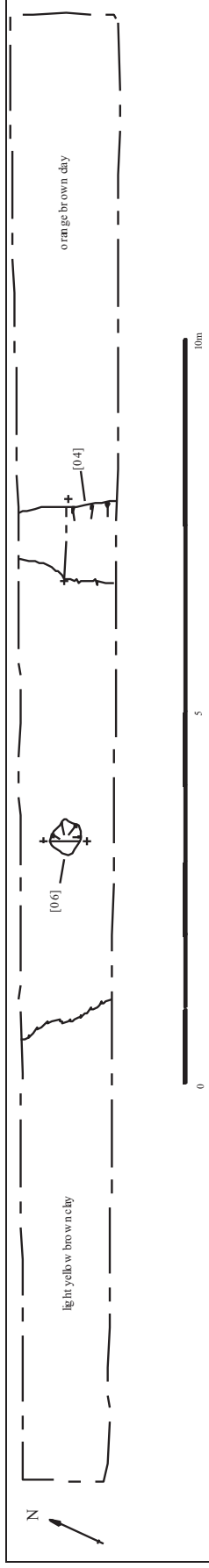


Fig. 4. Trench 1 plan.

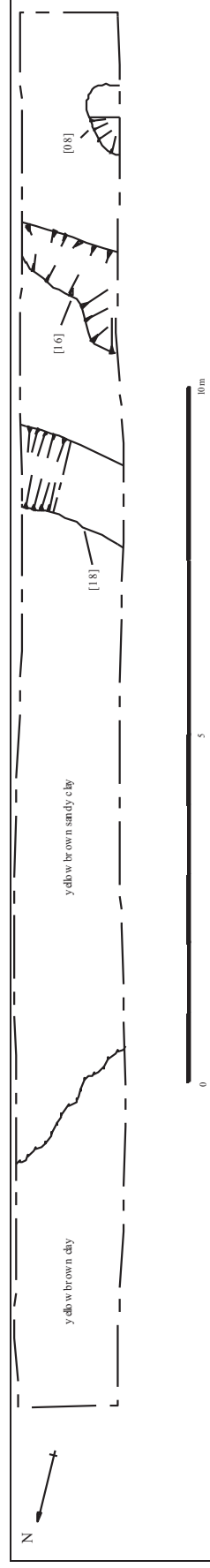


Fig. 5. Trench 2 plan.

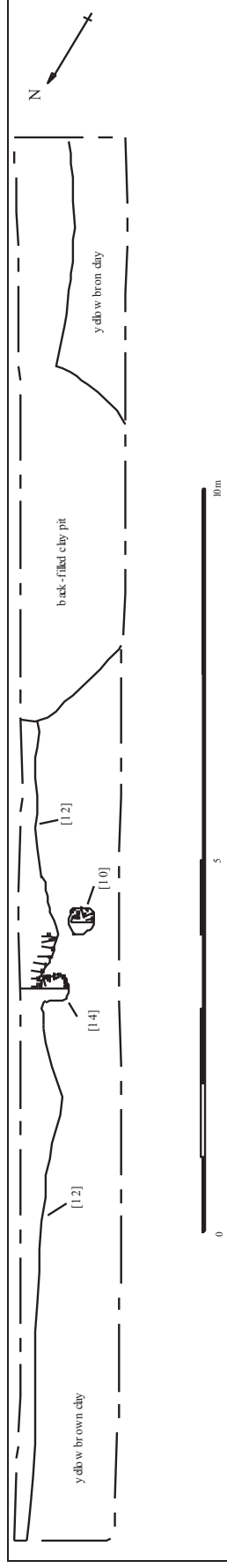


Fig. 6. Trench 3 plan.



Plate 1 excavation of Trench 1. The earthwork can be seen rising and falling in the far section.



Plate 2. De-turfed area of Trench 2 looking south east.



Plate 3. Trench 3 prior to excavation. The earthwork depression created by 19th century clay extraction pit.

Appendix 3

Context descriptions.

| Context | Cut | Below | Section | Type | Description |
|---------|-----|-------|---------|----------------|--|
| 1 | | | | Topsoil | Dark grey brown silty loam, many roots. Loose/friable. |
| 2 | | 1 | | Subsoil | Mid grey brown silty clay. Friable. |
| 3 | 4 | 2 | 1.01 | Fill of gully | Mid brown grey silty clay. Few stones. Friable. |
| 4 | | 3 | 1.01 | Cut of gully | Linear NW-SE |
| 5 | 6 | 2 | 1.03 | Fill of p/hole | Mid grey brown silty clay. Friable. |
| 6 | | 5 | 1.03 | Cut of p/hole | Sub-circular post hole. |
| 7 | 8 | 2 | 1.07 | Fill of pit | Pale orangey brown sandy silty clay. Friable. |
| 8 | | 7 | 1.07 | Cut of pit | Shallow sub-circular pit. |
| 9 | 10 | 2 | 2.01 | Fill of p/hole | Dk grey brown silty clay. Charcoal flecks. Friable |
| 10 | | 9 | 2.01 | Cut of p/hole | Irregular cut of post hole. |
| 11 | 12 | 14 | 2.02/3 | Fill of gully? | Dk grey brown silty clay. Charcoal flecks. Friable |
| 12 | | 11 | 2.02/3 | Cut of gully? | Possible gully/linear feature. |
| 13 | 14 | 2 | 2.02 | Fill of p/hole | Dk grey brown silty clay. Friable. |
| 14 | | 13 | 2.02 | Cut of p/hole | Post hole cut. |
| 15 | 16 | 2 | 2.05 | Fill of pit. | Mid yellow brown sandy silty clay. Firm. |
| 16 | | 15 | 2.05 | Cut of p/hole | Irregular shaped pit. |
| 17 | 18 | 2 | 3.01 | Fill of gully | Grey brown sandy clay. Firm. |
| 18 | | 17 | 3.01 | Cut of gully | Linear E-W gully/ditch. |