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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation of a Bronze Age enclosure, Hollygate House,  
Holygate Road, Ridlington, LE15 9AR**

**NGR: SP 87051 99725**

**Claire Brown**



**ULAS Report No 2019-073  
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**Site Name:** Hollygate House, Holygate Road, Ridlington, LE15 9AR

**Grid Ref:** SP 87051 99725

**Author:** Claire Brown

**Client:** Chris and Jo Hudson

**Planning Ref.** N/A

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## OASIS RECORD

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1-370535		
	<b>Project Name</b>	An Archaeological Evaluation of Bronze Age enclosure, Hollygate House, Holygate Road, Ridlington, LE15 9AR		
	<b>Start/end dates</b>	20-24 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	None		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Evaluation		
	<b>Site Status</b>	Scheduled Monument		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Garden		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	Bronze Age enclosure ditch		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	Requirement of Historic England		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	N/A		
<b>Planning Ref.</b>	N/A			
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>County</b>	Leicestershire		
	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Hollygate House, Holygate Road, Ridlington, LE15 9AR		
	<b>Study Area</b>	Trench 7m x 1m		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK 84555 02600		
	<b>Height OD</b>	160.68 m to 160.86m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Historic England		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Matt Beamish		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Donald Clark		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Chris and Jo Hudson		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	RM service	RM Service and Historic England	RM Service and Historic England
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>	OAKRM 2019 11	OAKRM 2019 11	OAKRM 2019 11
	<b>Contents</b>	None	Photographs	Report/ Photo Record/ Trench Sheets
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRA PHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
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## **An archaeological evaluation of a Bronze Age enclosure ditch at Hollygate House, Holygate Road, Ridlington, LE15 9AR**

**Claire Brown**

### **Summary**

*This document is a fieldwork report for an archaeological trench evaluation, carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in a garden containing a section of Bronze Age enclosure north of Hollygate House, Holygate Road, Ridlington, LE15 9AR. The work, excavating and recording one trench, was required by Historic England to assess the impact of the construction of a fishpond built over perimeter ditch of the Scheduled Monument without consent (Rimington n.d.).*

*The enclosure remains clearly visible as a landscape feature in the fields surrounding the garden and was recognised as an earthwork by the early 20th Century (Page 1908) and has previously been surveyed in some detail.*

*The trench, 7m x 1m was excavated immediately to the east of the fishpond and was excavated to a depth of 1 metre. Two metres from the southern end of the trench the edge of the Bronze Age ditch was uncovered, under a very large gritstone and two other large iron stone cobbles. The ditch fill extended north along the remainder of the trench. No artefacts were recovered.*

*The work demonstrated that that the cut of the ditch survives at a depth of 1 metre below current ground level and so it is unlikely that the excavation of the pond would have had a negative impact on the ditch.*

*The archive for the site will be deposited with Rutland Museum with accession number OAKRM: 2019 11.*

### **Introduction**

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Mr and Mrs Hudson in accordance with a brief for archaeological work issued by Historic England (Rimington n.d.). This required the excavation and recording of one trench in order to assess the impact of the construction of a fishpond over the site of a designated Scheduled Monument, a Bronze Age enclosure without consent. The site was a garden behind Hollygate House, Holygate Road, Ridlington, LE15 9AR (NGR SP 87051 99725 Fig. 1). The work was carried out between 20th-23rd May 2019.

The southern side of the Bronze Age enclosure (Scheduled Monument List Entry 1005043) passes west to east through the northern part of the garden. The fishpond was built across the line of the ditch without Scheduled Monument consent, and with no archaeological recording undertaken. The recording of an archaeological trench, adjacent to the fishpond, was required in order that the impact of the fishpond on buried archaeological remains could be assessed (Rimington n.d.).

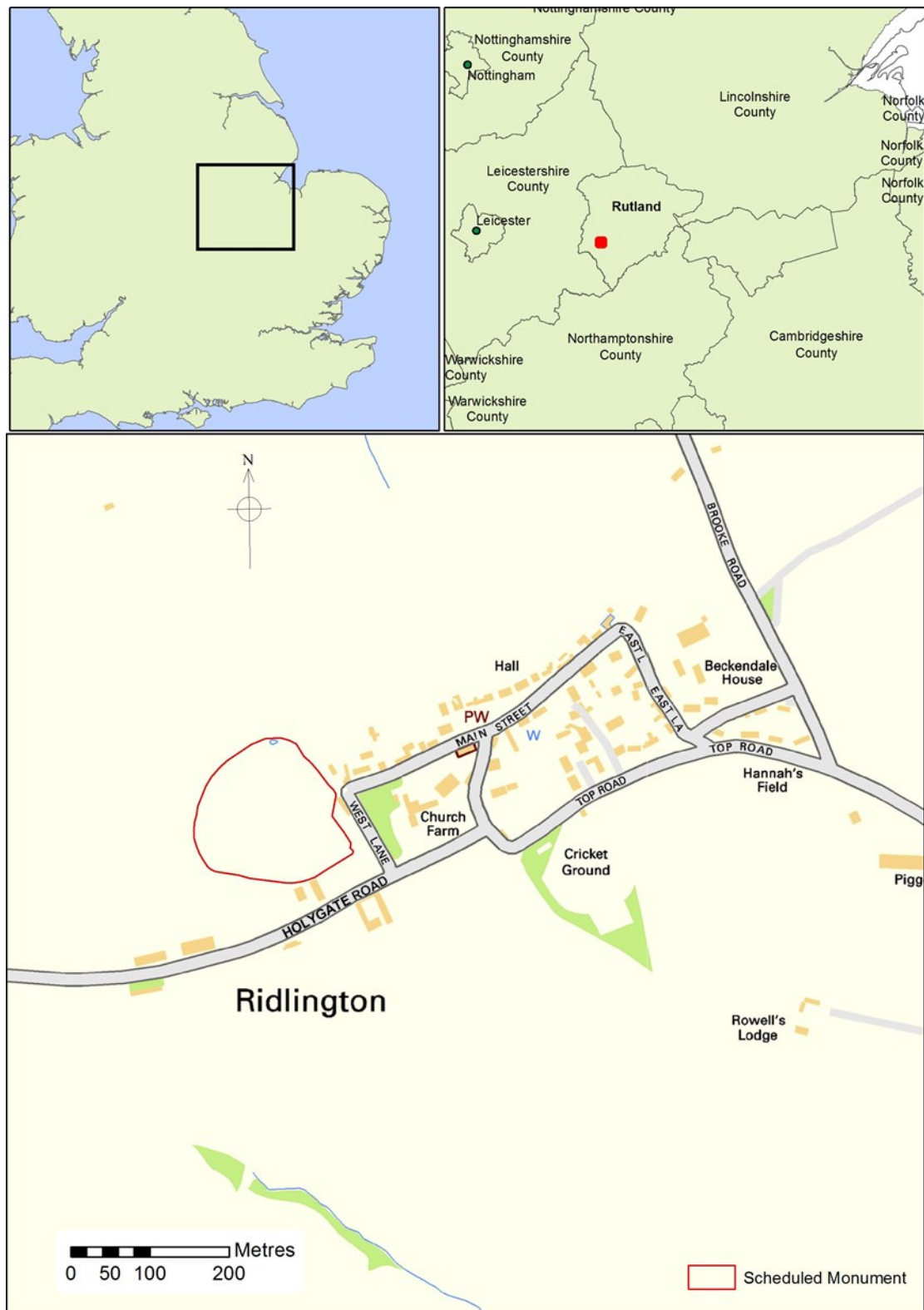


Figure 1: Site Location with area of Scheduled Monument

*Contains OS data © Crown copyright [and database right] (2019)*

## Location and Geology

The site lies at a height of approximately 160m OD to the north of the back garden of Hollygate house (Fig. 2). It is level, laid to lawn and with no surface evidence of earthworks.

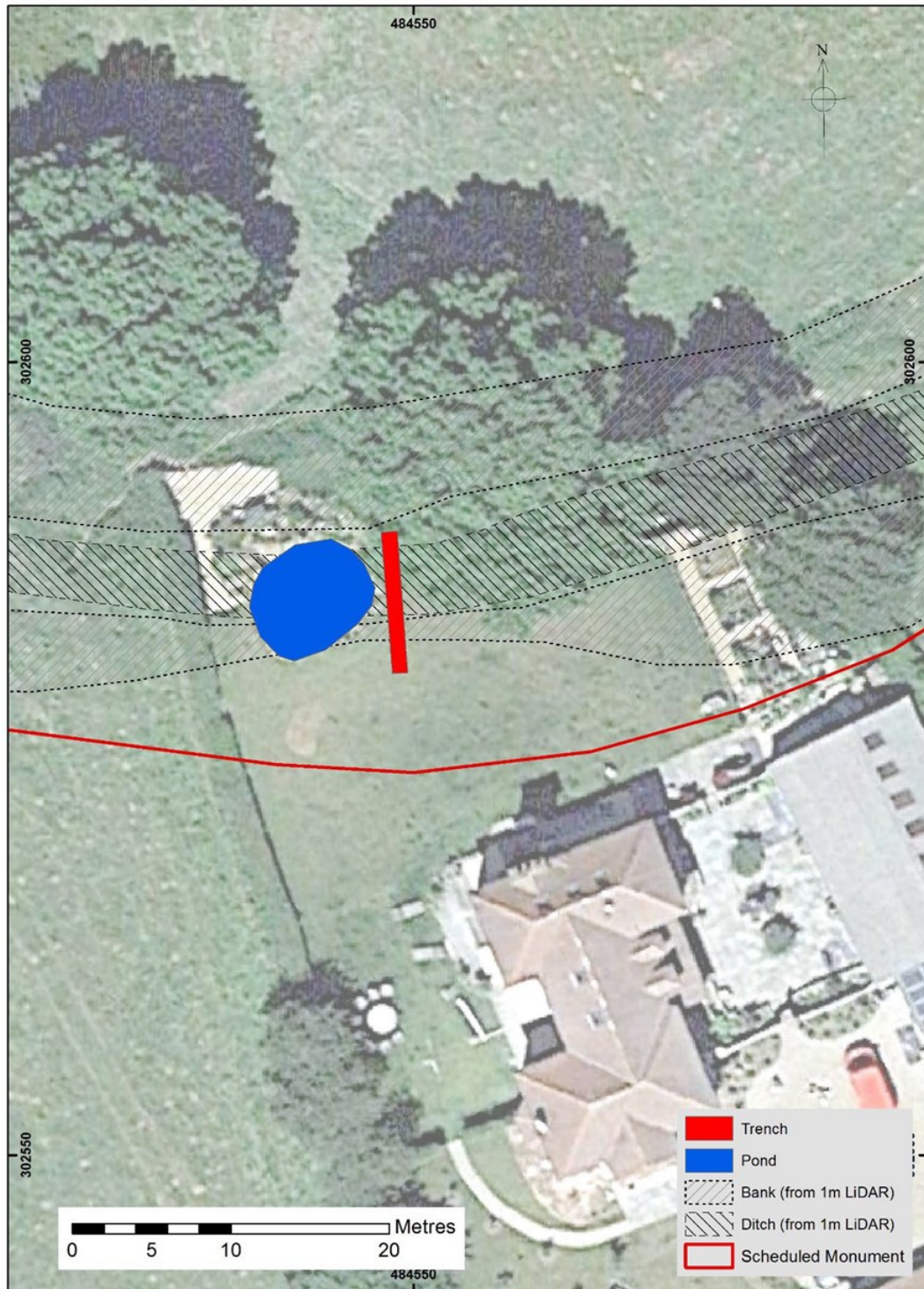


Figure 2: Location of trench in relation to Hollygate House, Scheduled Monument, and Pond from Google Earth satellite imagery. Location of banks and ditch interpreted from 1m aerial LiDAR data

*Lidar source Environment Agency (2019)  
Satellite Photo; Google Earth 25/6/2018*

## **Historical and Archaeological Background**

The National Monuments Record (NMR) indicates that a banked and ditched Bronze Age enclosure of some 2.6 ha is located on the northern edge of the site at the western end of Ridlington (List Entry 1005043). The OS map of 1970 indicates that the outer bank of the earthwork was no longer visible in the garden, but does show the ditch still persisting.

An archaeological investigation was undertaken in 1998 following unauthorised groundworks over the monument in an adjacent field to Hollygate House to the north-west. The report concluded that the groundworks had not impacted upon the archaeology of the Bronze Age enclosure but removed part of the natural bank that would have been incorporated into the design of the monument. No stratified finds were uncovered (Meek 1998).

## **Archaeological Objectives**

The main objective of the evaluation was to provide evidence to understand the nature, date, function, and character of the archaeological remains at the site in their cultural and environmental setting and to preserve it by record.

The objectives of the excavation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits and provide evidence of the nature and extent of surviving archaeological remains on the site.
- To characterise the extent, date range, character, condition and significance of any archaeological deposits that are adjacent to those previously impacted by ground works from the construction of a pond.
- To excavate and record significant archaeological deposits in that the impact of previous ground works on those archaeological deposits can be understood.
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

## **Research Objectives**

The National Monuments Record indicates that the ditch of a Bronze Age enclosure runs west to east across the area. On the basis of surface topography, it was estimated that the ditch was a substantial feature and would occupy most the trench to be excavated. On this basis it is possible to determine some initial objectives identified within *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda*, Leicester Archaeology Monograph 13, (ed. Cooper 2006) and *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (ed. Knight et al 2012).

The excavation results had potential to contribute to knowledge on Bronze Age – Iron Age transitions in rural settlement, landscape and society. Specific research questions included:

- Neolithic and Early to Middle Bronze Age: How might settlement morphology and functions have varied regionally and over time, and in particular when, where and why may the first enclosed settlements have developed? [3.5.3];



- Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlements: How many hillforts might have developed during this period and what functions may they have performed? [4.3.3]

## Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev. 2014a) in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (rev. 2014b). The archaeological work followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for Archaeological Evaluation* prepared by ULAS and agreed with the Historic England Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Dr Neil Rimmington. The work was monitored by the client and Historic England.

An accession number (OAKRM: 2019 11) was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records.

Four members of the Rutland Field Workers volunteered to participate in the evaluation and were provided with training, tools and constant supervision for the duration of the evaluation.

The 1m wide, 7m long evaluation trench was marked out adjacent to the pond and the turf carefully removed (Figs 3 and 4)



Figure 3: The trench marked out adjacent to the pond, looking north.





Figure 4: De-turfing the trench. Looking north.



Figure 5: The area of the trench de-turfed, looking north.



The topsoil and some of the subsoil was removed by a mini-digger to a depth of 0.5m under constant archaeological supervision, using a flat bladed ditching bucket and in successive level spits (Figs 6 and 7).



Figure 6: Mini-digger excavating top and sub soil to 0.5m. Looking north.





Figure 7: Trench excavated to 0.5m. Looking north.

The western half of the trench was then excavated by hand to a depth of 1m (Figs 8 and 9)





Figure 8: Hand excavation of the eastern half of the trench. Looking south-east.



Figure 9: Eastern half of trench excavated to a depth of 1m. Looking north.



Once recorded, the trench was backfilled by the mini-digger and the turf replaced (Fig 10).



Figure 10: Turf replaced after trench recorded and backfilled.

## Results

The topsoil, which had been imported from elsewhere according to the client, was friable dark grey-brown silt only 0.1m in depth with occasional inclusions of small stones and rare inclusions of white china and glass. The subsoil, approximately 0.85m in depth was orange-brown silty sand with variable amounts of small rounded pebbles and, rare large stones and river cobbles. The natural substratum was a bright yellow-orange and sandy clay free of inclusions.

Two metres from the southern end of the trench was a large glacial erratic gritstone boulder, adjacent to two smaller ironstone river cobbles (Fig. 10). When the boulder was removed, a clear change from the natural substratum was noted, from smooth yellow orange natural substratum to darker, siltier orange fill with small pebble inclusions (03). The change marked the edge of the ditch cut [01] (Figs 11 and 12). Silty deposits continued to the north of the trench and became progressively darker and with increased stone components (04), (05) (Fig. 13).





Figure 11: Almost fully excavated trench with gritstone boulder in place, looking north





Figure 12: View of trench looking north showing ditch cut [01] as darker fill near boulder



Figure 13: Close up of ditch cut [01]

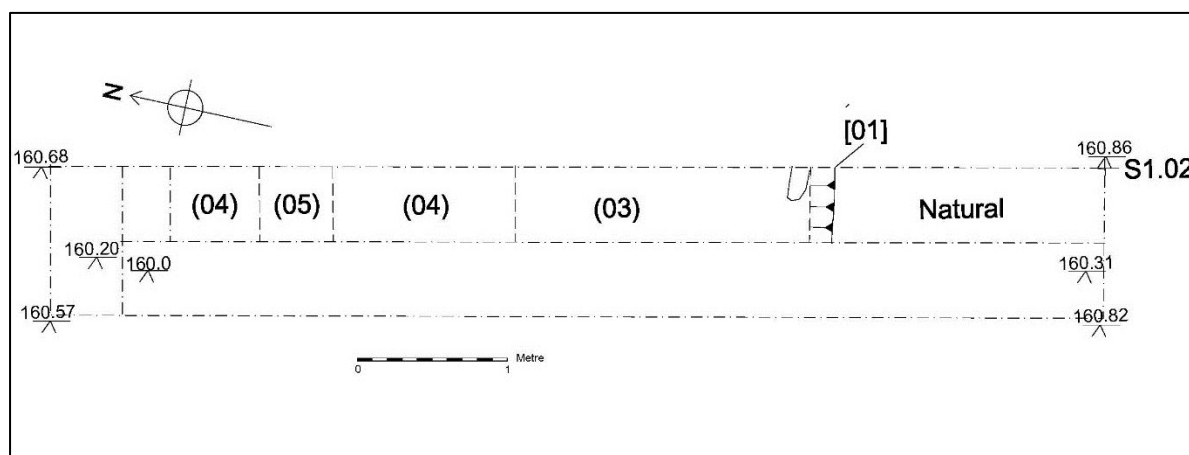


Figure 14: Trench plan showing ditch cut [01]

The section (Figs 15 and 16) shows a number of darker fills in the subsoil in the northern half of the trench. Fill (04), orange-brown silty sand with occasional small pebbles, and fill (05), grey-brown silty sand with common small and medium pebble inclusions, correspond to the deeper section of the ditch and may represent an episode of make up above the ditch. Unfortunately lack of dating evidence makes it difficult to establish when this occurred. Fill (07) is a dark grey-brown loamy silty sand and suggests a later, possibly modern infilling of any remaining depression resulting from the ditch to create a level lawn.



Figure 15: Composite photograph of west facing section.

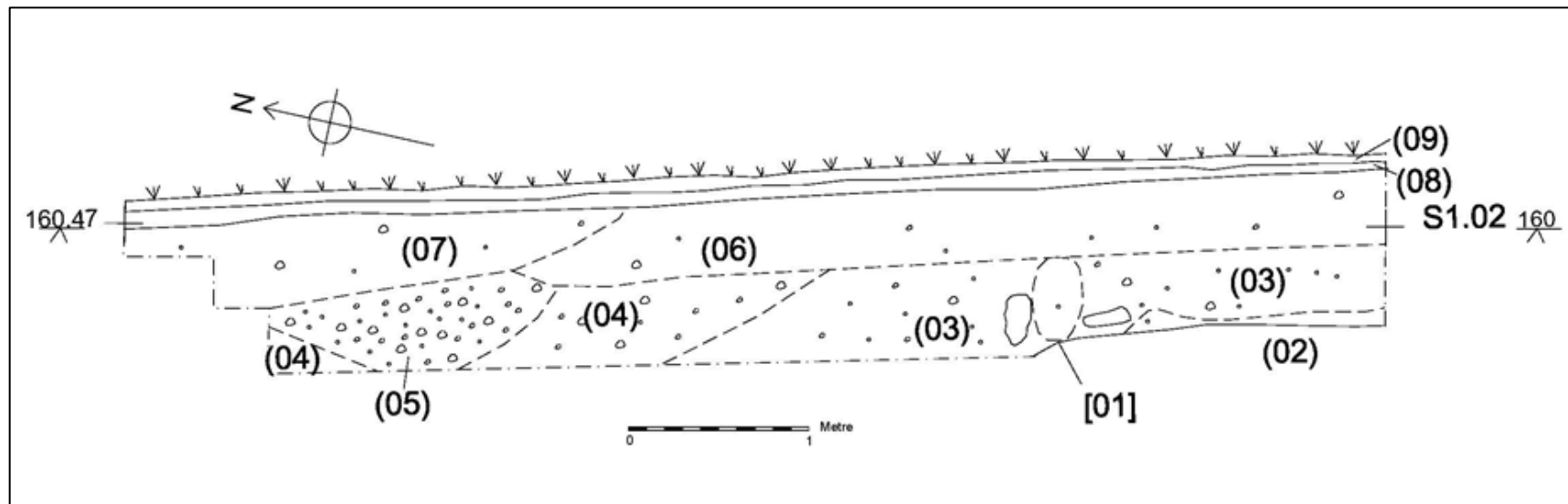


Figure 16: West facing section of the trench showing ditch cut [01]



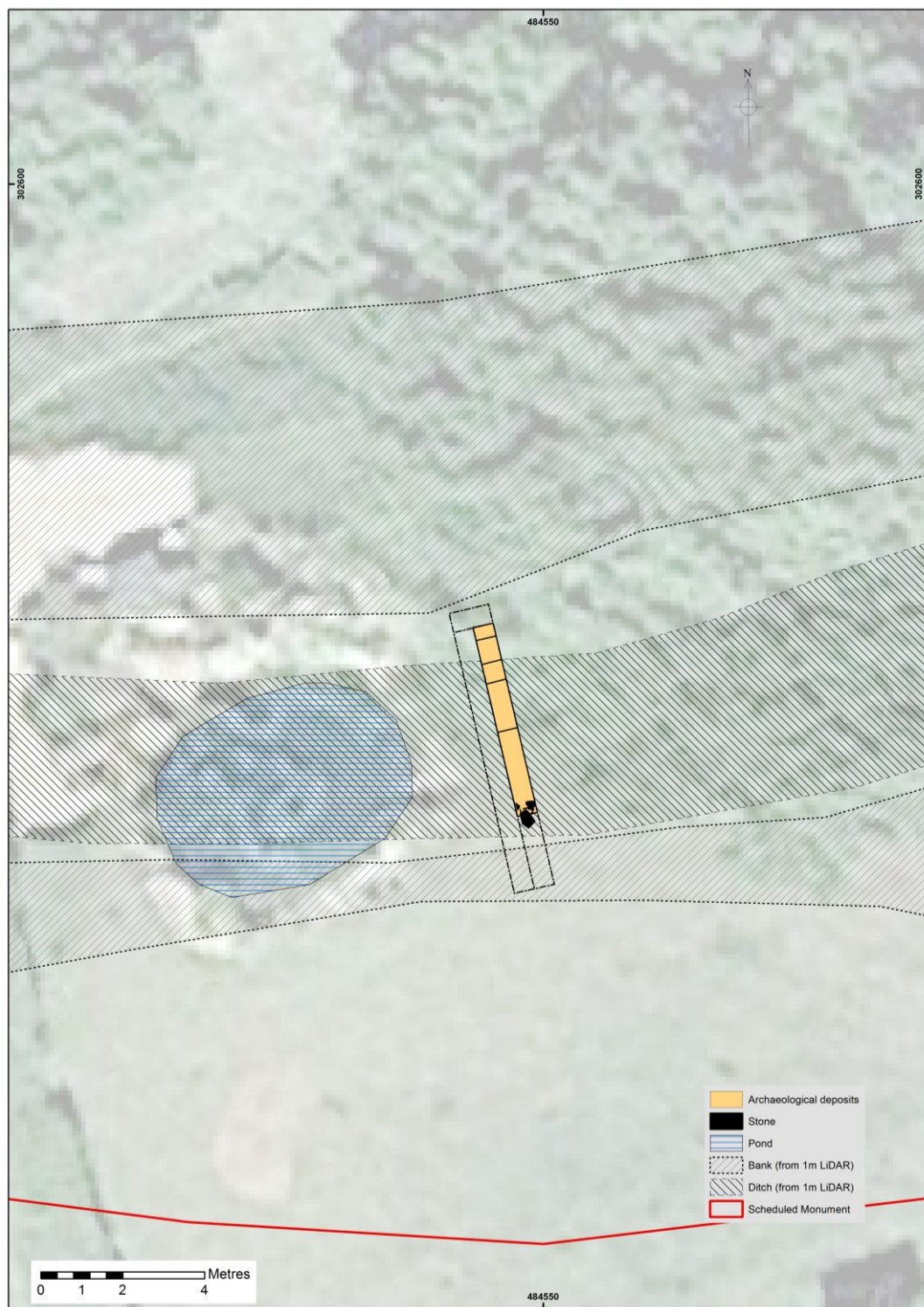


Figure 17: Results of evaluation in relation to Scheduled Monument boundary and interpretation/interpolation of 1m LiDAR.

*Lidar source Environment Agency (2019)  
Satellite Photo; Google Earth 25/6/2018*

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The excavation of the trench adjacent to the pond at Hollygate House located the southern edge of the Bronze Age ditch known to run east-west across northern third of the garden. The cut was marked by a change from the natural to a darker, less compact fill and by a large boulder and stones. No finds were uncovered during the excavation, so dating of the ditch and associated soils was not possible. A series of backfilling and/or make-up episodes were identified in section. The depth of the cut of the ditch at 1m suggests that the digging of the garden pond would have had minimal impact on the ditch itself, while the lack of surviving earthworks in the garden implies that the banks had been removed at some point in the past to level the ground and were not in evidence when the pond was dug.

While the evaluation had the potential to contribute to knowledge on Bronze Age-Iron Age transitions in rural settlement, landscape and society, the lack of dateable finds, small area of excavation and 1 metre depth restriction made this challenging. Its impressive size and likely depth are still evident. What is encouraging is that in spite of modern landscaping over the monument, the Bronze Age enclosure ditch survives, in modified form, beneath the garden: the southern edge of the ditch was located where anticipated on the basis of existing information.

## **Archive and publication**

The archive for this project will be deposited with Rutland Museum with accession number OAKRM 2019 11 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2019-073)
- 7 Fill recording sheets
- 1 Photo Record sheet
- 1 Contact sheet of digital photographs
- 1 CD digital photographs

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

## **Acknowledgements**

ULAS would like to thank Mrs Hudson for her kind co-operation during the excavation work, Stuart of Planters Ltd for his expert traversing of the garden, digging and backfilling, and finally our volunteers from Rutland Field Workers for their tireless enthusiasm and dedication: Penelope Rowe, Fatimah Sharmon, Jane Greenhalgh, Linda Dalby and Marion Drake. The project was supervised by Donald Clark assisted by Claire Brown, managed by Matthew Beamish and monitored by Neil Rimmington of Historic England.



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