

**An Archaeological Evaluation on land east of Lutterworth Road, Burbage,
Leicestershire LE10 2DL**

NGR: SP 447 920

Leon Hunt



Site Name: Land east of Lutterworth Road, Burbage, Leicestershire LE10 2DL

Grid Ref: SP 44737 91966

Author: Leon Hunt

Client: Donald Sutherland (Pegasus Group) on behalf of Davidsons

Planning Ref. Pre Planning

ULAS Report Number: 2019-149

Accession Number: X.A73.2019

Filename/Version	Checked by	Date
Draft	Vicki Score	14/11/2019
Revision	Vicki Score	09/01/2020

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University of Leicester, Archaeological Services,
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848
www.le.ac.uk/ulas

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OASIS RECORD

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1- 373626		
	Project Name	Land east of Lutterworth Road, Burbage		
	Start/end dates	4 th -8 th Nov 2019		
	Previous/Future Work	Yes/Not known		
	Project Type	Archaeological Evaluation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Pasture		
	Monument Type/Period	Linear/ Undated		
	Significant Finds/Period	None		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Pre-planning		
Planning Ref.	-			
PROJECT LOCATION	County	Leicestershire		
	Site Address/Postcode	Land east of Lutterworth Road, Burbage, Leicestershire, LE10 2DL		
	Study Area	11 ha		
	Site Coordinates	SP 447 920		
	Height OD	108-114m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	University of Leicester Archaeological Services		
	Project Brief Originator	Leicestershire County Council		
	Project Design Originator	Vicki Score		
	Project Manager	Vicki Score		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Leon Hunt		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Pegasus Planning		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	None	Leicestershire Museums	Leicestershire Museums
	ID (Acc. No.)	None	X.A73.2019	X.A73.2019
	Contents	None	Raster images	Report/ Trench Sheets/ Photo Record
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature		
	Description	A4 Spiral Bound		
	Title	An Archaeological Evaluation on land east of Lutterworth Road, Burbage, Leicestershire LE10 2DL		
	Author	Leon Hunt		
	Other bibliographic details	2019-149		
	Date	2019		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		

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An archaeological evaluation on land east of Lutterworth Road, Burbage, Leicestershire LE10 2DL

Leon Hunt

Summary

A trial trench evaluation was carried out on land east of Lutterworth Road, Burbage, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 447 920) in advance of the proposed development of the site for new housing. Iron Age and Roman field systems lie around 400m to the west of the site and there are known Bronze Age barrows and prehistoric findspots in the vicinity of Burbage.

The proposed development area consisted of a number of pasture fields, some with extant ridge and furrow earthworks.

A geophysical survey was carried out prior to the trial trenching. This was largely negative but for a few anomalies, including a possible ring ditch, which were targeted by trenches, along with further trenches located to provide coverage of the area. Nine 30m x 1.6m trenches were excavated over three of the fields within the proposed development area.

Most of the trenches were negative containing silty clay upper soils over a poorly drained gravelly clay sub-stratum, with some trenches containing field drains.

Features were revealed in three trenches. Trench 01 contained a modern feature. Trenches 02 and 04 contained a possible linear feature running between the two trenches on a north-west to south-east alignment. Although possible that this could be a shallow ditch, it lies on the same alignment as the furrows and could be a large furrow deepened by the presence of a field drain. No other features were revealed during the evaluation. The trench over the possible ring ditch recorded on the geophysical survey revealed no archaeological features in this area.

The archive for this work will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service with accession number X.A73.2019.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Donald Sutherland of Pegasus Group on behalf of Davidsons to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land east of Lutterworth Road, Burbage, Leicestershire LE10 2DL. The site is located at the south-eastern edge of Burbage to the west of the B578 Lutterworth Road. The site centre co-ordinates are at approximately SP 44737 91966.

The site is currently a group of nine pasture fields of various sizes covering a total of 11 hectares. There are known prehistoric and Roman archaeological remains in the vicinity, including flint finds from adjacent fields.

This report presents the results of a programme of an archaeological trial trench evaluation, which took place between 4th-8th November 2019. A total of nine trenches were excavated across three fields.

The work was carried out as part of a phased programme of archaeological work required by the Planning Authority following advice from the Leicestershire Planning Archaeologist in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, MHCLG 2019). The proposed development is for new housing.

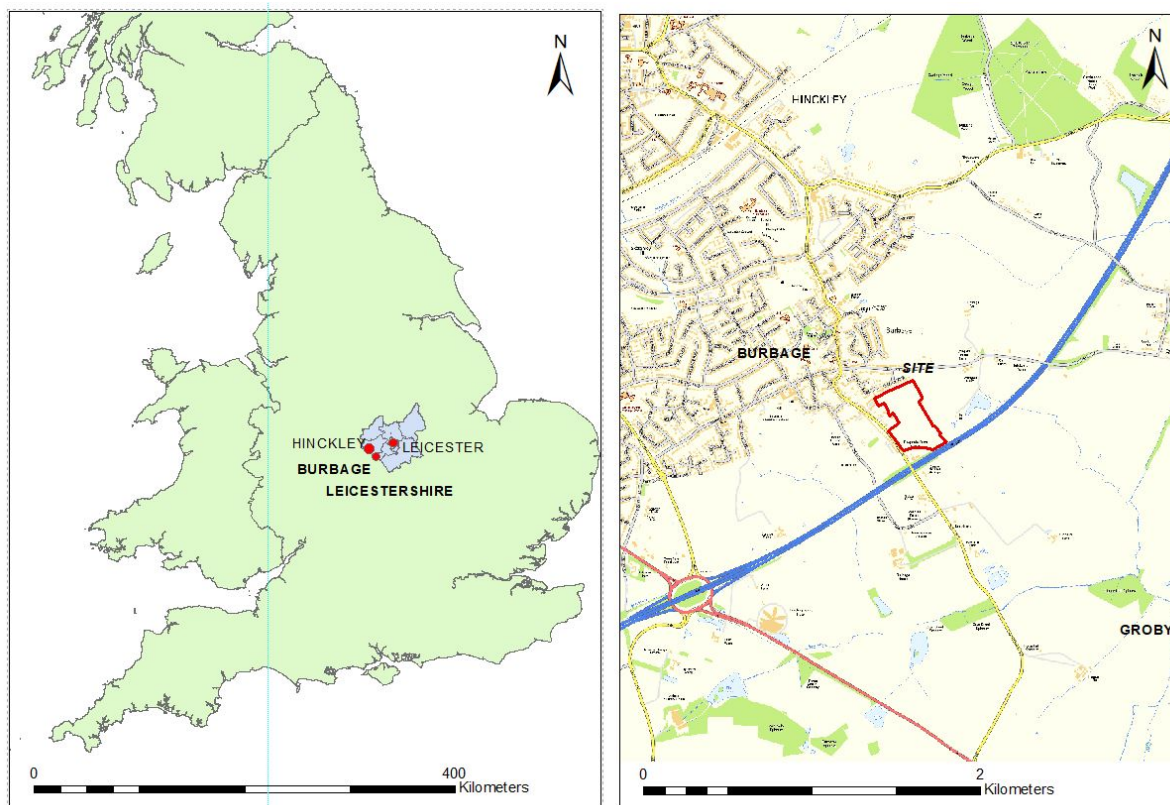


Figure 1: Site Location

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Location and Geology

Burbage is a suburb of the larger urban area of Hinckley, part of the Hinckley and Bosworth borough (Fig. 1). The site is located to the south-east of Burbage, outside of the Conservation Area and immediately east of Lutterworth Road. The M69 motorway bounds the site to the south, with residential properties to the north and north-west and agricultural land to the east.

The development area is currently a series of pasture fields, and approximately 8.92ha in size (Fig. 2). The land falls very slightly to the south-east from around 114m aOD to 108m aOD. There are agricultural buildings to the east of the site.

The British Geological Survey identifies the bedrock geology of the area as Mercia Mudstone Group – Mudstone. This is overlain by Oadby member diamicton across the majority of the site, with Wolston Sand and Gravel across the west and Bosworth Clay Member clay and silt deposits in the east.

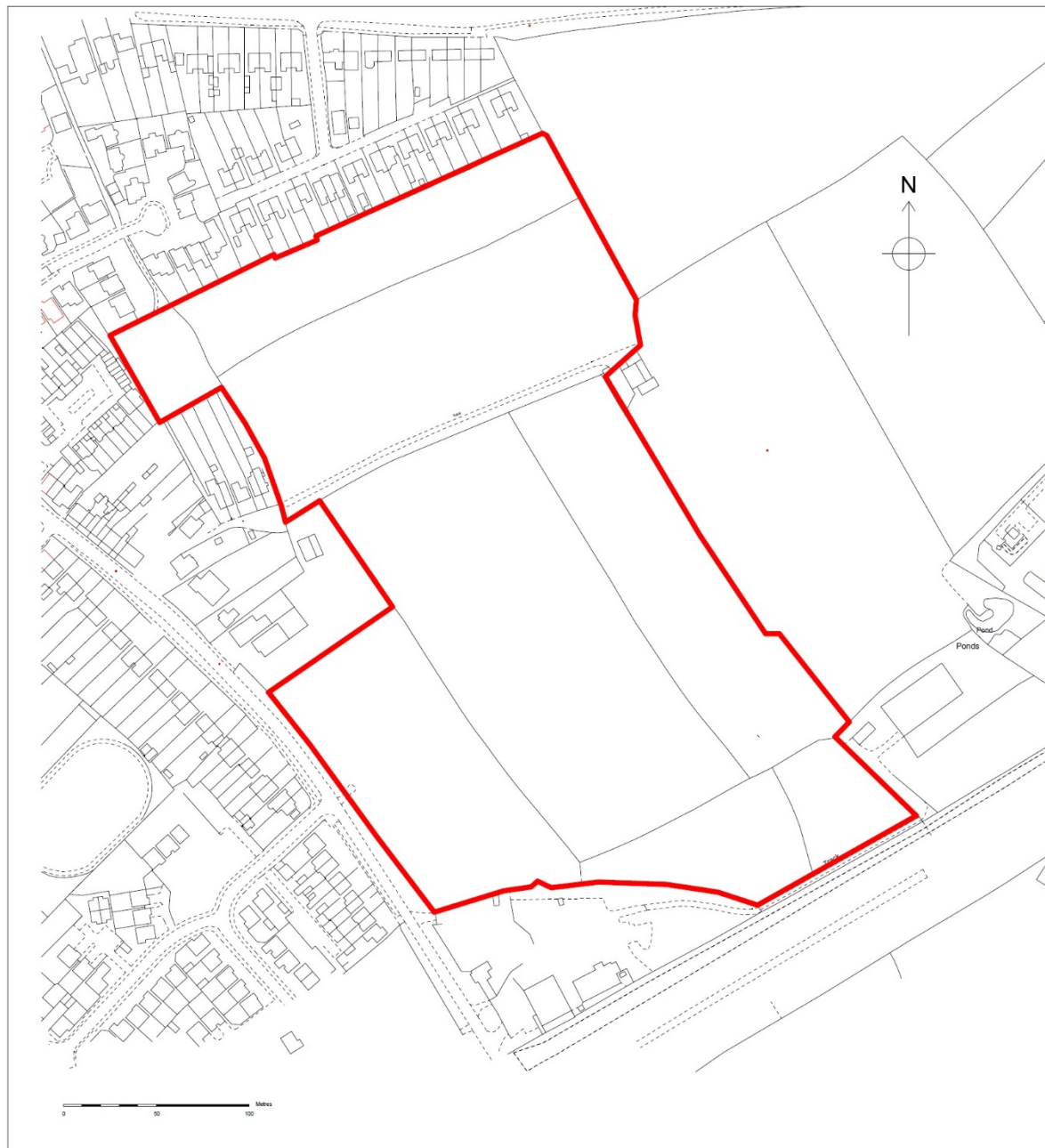


Figure 2: Plan of the proposed development area. Contains Ordnance Survey data

Historical and Archaeological Background

Historical Background

Burbage is mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Burbece', suggesting an Anglo-Saxon origin for Burbage or 'Burbach': 'Burr' referring to a variety of thistle, common to the location even today and 'bach' coming from a Germanic term for a rivulet or ford (Mills 2003). It was originally part of the Sparkenhoe Hundred of Leicestershire, in Guthlaxton Wapentake and now lies in the Borough of Hinckley and Bosworth. The land was held by Coventry Abbey and was valued at four pounds, housing 20 villagers, with two smallholders and two slaves. Prior to Domesday, the 1043 Foundation Charter of the Monastery of the Blessed Mary of Coventry records that 'Burbagh' was amongst townships given by Leofric, Earl of Mercia, to Coventry Abbey. Leofric, the Abbot of Coventry Abbey was supposedly mortally wounded in the battle

against the Norman invasion at Hastings. In 1100 King William took lands away from Coventry Abbey and the manor of Burbach was given to Robert de Flamville and later passed to John de Hastings. The manor remained with the de Hastings family until 1401. In 1401, the Manor became the property of the Greys of Ruthin and remained under their ownership until 1797 (Nichols 1811).

By 1564 the diocesan returns indicate the population was still small, consisting of 57 families; the settlement remained small, and the census of 1801 recorded only 1098 inhabitants. It was not until the 20th century that the population exceeded 2000. Between 1862 and 1864 the London & North Western Railways (LNWR) opened the South Leicestershire Line. The alignment of this effectively prevented Burbage from being swallowed by the expansion of Hinckley and thus the village remained a separate entity and also perhaps contributed to some extent to its relatively slow growth. Nevertheless Burbage did effectively become a suburb of Hinckley in the 1950s with the building of Sketchley Hill housing estate, which alone added over 3000 people to the population.

During the English Civil War documentary evidence suggests Burbage suffered significant forage raids from the North Warwickshire Parliamentary Garrison. Claims include 20 strikes of 'providers' worth £1 taken by Captain Flower's troop (Coventry Garrison). Captain Willington from the Tamworth Garrison took a mare, a horse and a saddle worth £5 from a Thomas Bodington and a John Watkin, both residents of Burbage (Compton 1927).

Archaeological Background

The site lies just outside the historic medieval core of the village to the south-east. The historic core of the village contains a number of historical buildings, but none are in the immediate vicinity of the development area. A summary of the known archaeology of the area is shown below with the HER numbers shown in bold in the text.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland indicates that there are no known archaeological remains recorded on the assessment area itself, but adjacent to it there are records of prehistoric flints and ridge and furrow cultivation found during the monitoring of groundworks for a pipeline. Fieldwork in the area has found evidence of a Bronze Age cremation cemetery (**MLE23172**), an Iron Age enclosure (**MLE21696**), and a possible Roman field system (**MLE20670**) to the west of Workhouse Lane, which lies around 400-500m west of the proposed development area. There are a number of findspots within a 1km radius of the assessment area, including a Neolithic arrowhead (**MLE7235**), 15 worked flints (**MLE18737**) and Roman pottery described as 1st-2nd century mortaria and coarse ware (**MLE7935**).

Medieval and post-mediaeval archaeology lie mainly in the village core, although there are some pottery finds from the area. The site is likely to have formed part of the agricultural hinterland to Burbage from at least the medieval period. While none of these records relate directly to the development area, archaeology nearby suggests that there is the possibility for archaeology to be present on the site.

A detailed magnetometer survey carried out by SUMO Geophysics Ltd (Sumo 2019) recorded no responses that could be interpreted as being of definite archaeological interest. However, it did identify a curvilinear ditch-type anomaly in Area 4 (1) (no longer within the site boundaries), and a curving linear anomaly at the south of Area 5 (2). Furrows were also mapped across the site along with a trackway (3), an old pond (4); both shown on early maps of the area, and a modern service pipe (5) (Fig. 3). Another service pipe shown on modern services plans was not picked up by the survey.

Research Objectives

While the nature, extent and quality of archaeological remains within the areas of investigation for the project remain unknown until archaeological work is undertaken, it is possible to determine some initial objectives derived from *East Midlands Heritage* research agenda (Cooper 2006, Knight *et al.* 2012). The known archaeological sites on the HER suggests that there is some potential for archaeological deposits on the site from the prehistoric and Roman periods. The evaluation therefore has the potential to contribute to the following specific research aims:

Late Iron Age

- How are the nucleated settlements related to one another and to other settlements of the period? In particular, is there evidence for a developing settlement hierarchy?
- How may nucleated and other settlements have developed in the Roman period?
- Can we shed further light upon the development of field and boundary systems?
- What were the economic, social or political roles of the pit alignments and linear ditch systems that characterised many areas of the East Midlands?

Roman

- How did rural settlements relate to each other and to towns and military sites, and how may this have varied regionally and over time?
- How did field and boundary systems relate to earlier systems of land allotment, and how did these boundary networks develop over time?

Medieval

- How can we shed further light upon the origin and development of dispersed hamlets and farms in champion and pastoral areas?

These research aims have been identified based on the current state of knowledge within the area of the scheme. The research aims will be re-assessed and updated during the course of the fieldwork.

Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev. 2019) in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (rev. 2019). The archaeological work followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for exploratory trial trenching* prepared by Vicki Score and agreed with the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist. The work was monitored by the client Donald Sutherland (Pegasus Group) and the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist.

The accession number (X.A73.2019) was obtained and used to identify all records and artefacts.

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

A 2% sample of four areas within the site (comprising c.1.95ha in total) had been agreed with Simon Loaring, Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council.

A provisional plan showed the proposed 8 trenches (each 30m x 1.6m) over three fields. An additional trench was added following consultation with Sophie Clarke, Senior Planning Archaeologist.

Topsoil and overburden were removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed ground, whichever was reached first. Excavation was carried out with a JCB 3CX

fitted with a flat-bladed ditching bucket (Fig. 4). The original trench locations were slightly changed to avoid both a sewer pipe and a water main which crossed the site broadly south-west to east. A further local water pipe lay to the south.

Archaeological deposits encountered were recorded in plan and excavated using standard ULAS procedures. All exposed features were to be investigated (unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Archaeologist). All trenches were backfilled after the conclusion of the site.



Figure 4: Work in progress on Trench 01, looking east



Figure 5: Field 1, showing ridge and furrow, looking south

Results

The trial trenching covered parts of three fields (Fig. 6). Trench 01 was excavated in Field 1, which contained fairly well-preserved ridge and furrow earthworks (Fig. 5). Trenches 02-03 were excavated on the northern side of Field 2, with Trenches 04-07 further to the south. Trenches 08-09 were excavated in Field 3.

Throughout the site the topsoil encountered consisted of a dark brown firm silty clay with rare sub-rounded and sub-angular stones, lying over a subsoil of mid yellow brown firm silty clay with rare sub-rounded and sub-angular stones.

The natural sub-stratum mainly consisted of yellow brown stony or silty clay, often with patches of sand and gravel, except in Trench 07 in Field 2, where the northern side of the trench was largely an orange brown sandy clay with gravel, with silty clay to the south.

At the time of the evaluation there had been heavy rain and the fields were generally very wet and muddy, with some waterlogging, particularly in the northern part of Field 2, where Trenches 02 and 03 were positioned. Many of the trenches became partially flooded with groundwater soon after excavation, with the aforementioned Trenches 02 and 03 presenting a problem during recording and backfilling, with the machine experiencing difficulty operating within areas of boggy ground.

Table 1: summary of all trenches

Trench	Orientation	Min. Depth	Max. Depth	Dimensions	Comments
01	NE-SW	0.44m	0.68m	30m x 1.6m	Modern Feature
02	NE-SW	0.41m	0.87m	30m x 1.6m (with extension 3m)	Large silty feature Field drain
03	NE-SW	0.41m	0.52m	30m x 1.6m	-
04	NE-SW	0.45m	0.62m	30m x 1.6m	Feature -Large furrow?
05	E-W	0.48m	0.57m	30m x 1.6m	-
06	SE-NW	0.51m	0.64m	30m x 1.6m	-
07	N-S	0.39m	0.56m	30m x 1.6m	Field drain
08	E-W	0.50m	0.80m	30m x 1.6m	Field drain
09	SE-NW	0.48m	0.71m	30m x 1.6m	-

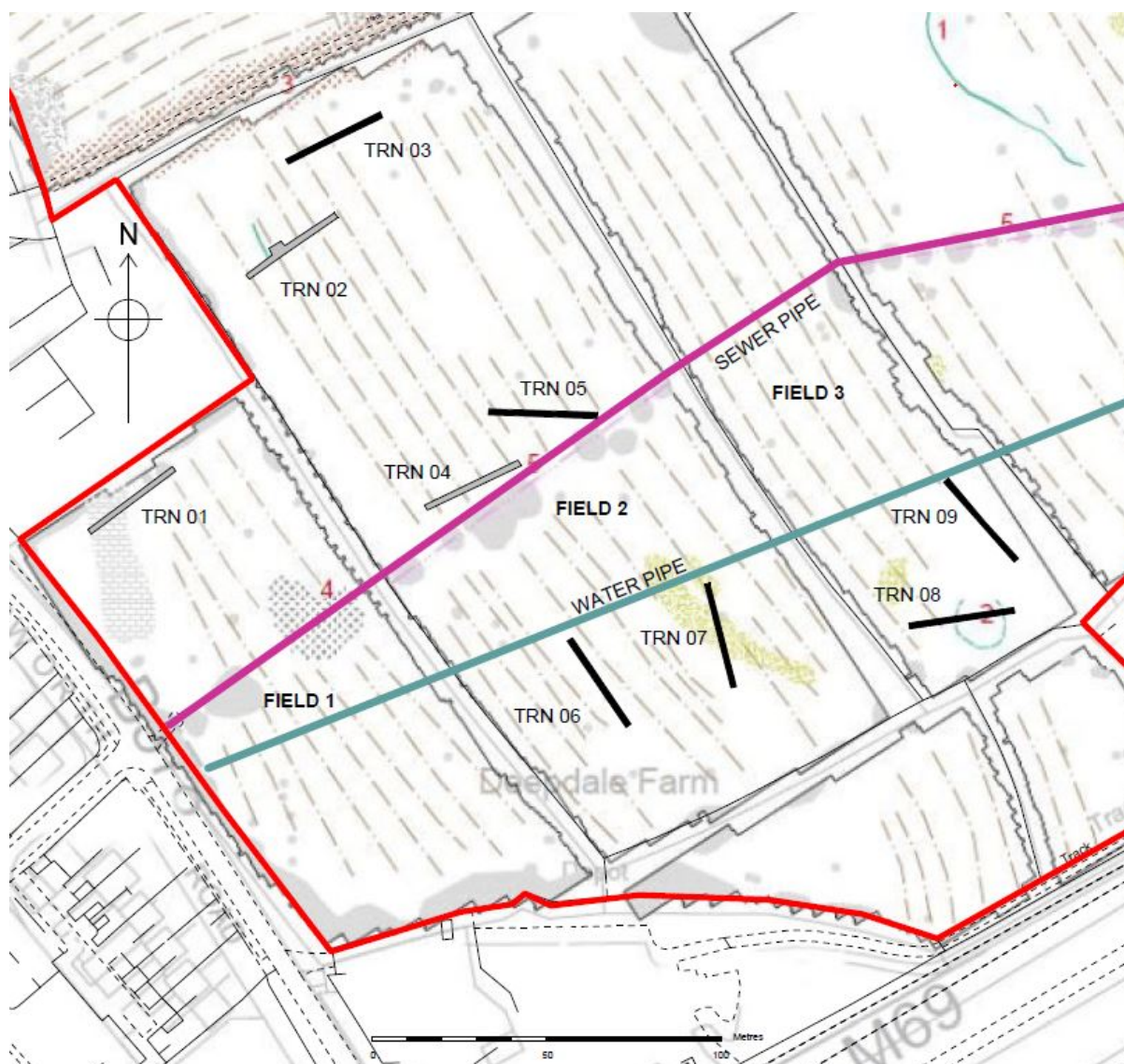


Figure 6: Location of evaluation trenches. Positive trenches in grey, negative in black

Trench 01

Trench 01 contained a modern feature running broadly north to south across the trench. It was 1.20m wide close to the centre of the trench. It was cut from the ground surface and filled with a very dark silty topsoil and a considerable amount of modern brick. Cartographic evidence would suggest that this was part of an old field boundary.

It was difficult to record the north-eastern end of the trench due to ground and rain water flooding the trench.

Interval from SW	0-3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m	24m	27m	To NE end 30m
Ground (OD)	115.41m									
Topsoil depth	0.23m	0.23m	0.25m	0.28m	0.25m	0.28m	0.25m	flood	flood	0.30m
Subsoil depth	0.17m	0.19m	0.18m	feature	0.23m	0.25m	0.26m	flood	flood	flood
Top of Natural substratum	0.40m	0.42m	0.43m	feature	0.48m	0.53m	0.51m	flood	flood	flood
Base of trench	0.48m	0.59m	0.58m	0.68m	0.65m	0.59m	0.55m	0.46m	0.44m	0.54m



Figure 7: Trench 01, post excavation, looking north-east



Figure 8: Modern feature in Trench 01, south-east facing section, looking north-west

Trench 02

Trench 02 contained a wide silty feature (1), which was initially machined across in order to assess its depth, but was not fully excavated. The trench was extended in width for the length of the feature in order to clarify its nature.

The feature was around 4.3m in width and approximately 0.44m deep and consisted of a greyish brown silty clay with a large segment of broken field drain within the fill. It had no obvious cut. A field drain extended from the eastern side of the feature running north-west to south-east. When the trench was extended the feature was not seen to any depth, although further pieces of drain were recovered from the area. The trench later became partially flooded in this area and at the north-eastern end.

Interval from SW	0-3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m	24m	27m	To NE end 30m
Ground (OD)	114.69m									
Topsoil depth	0.24m	0.26m	0.23m	0.23m	0.23m	0.22m	flood	flood	flood	flood
Subsoil depth	0.20m	0.18m	0.20m	0.20m	0.18m	0.18m	flood	flood	flood	flood
Top of Natural substratum	0.44m	0.44m	0.43m	feature	0.41m	0.40m	flood	flood	flood	flood
Base of trench	0.51m	0.53m	0.51m	0.87m	0.44m	0.45m	0.40m	0.44m	0.41m	0.51m



Figure 9: Trench 02, post-excavation but before extension, looking north-east



Figure 10: Trench 02, after extension, before becoming flooded, showing silty feature (1)

Trench 03

No features were revealed within this trench.

Interval from SW	0-3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m	24m	27m	To NE end 30m
Ground (OD)	114.49m									
Topsoil depth	0.27m	0.26m	0.24m	0.27m	0.28m	0.23m	0.27m	0.30m	0.30m	0.28m
Subsoil depth	0.13m	0.19m	0.15m	0.12m	0.11m	0.17m	0.14m	0.10m	flood	flood
Top of Natural substratum	0.40m	0.45m	0.39m	0.39m	0.39m	0.40m	0.41m	0.40m	flood	flood
Base of trench	0.42m	0.48m	0.48m	0.41m	0.42m	0.45m	0.50m	0.49m	0.52m	0.44m

Trench 04

A feature was revealed running north-west to south-east across the width of the trench. Feature (2) was 1.75m wide and around 0.18m deep. It consisted of light yellow brown silty clay with rare small stones, similar to the subsoil.

Interval from SW	0-3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m	24m	27m	To NE end 30m
Ground (OD)	112.81m									
Topsoil depth	0.24m	0.25m	0.24m	0.30m	0.24m	0.22m	0.26m	0.27m	0.24m	0.23m
Subsoil depth	0.18m	0.15m	0.17m	0.19m	0.17m	0.25m	0.22m	0.21m	0.22m	0.20m
Top of Natural substratum	0.42m	0.40m	0.41m	0.49m	0.41m	0.47m	0.48m	0.48m	0.46m	0.43m
Base of trench	0.54m	0.45m	0.57m	0.62m	0.58m	0.61m	0.58m	0.62m	0.58m	0.56m



Figure 11: Feature (2) south-east facing section, looking north-west

Trench 05

No features were revealed within this trench.

Interval from W	0-3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m	24m	27m	To E end 30m
Ground (OD)	112.15m									
Topsoil depth	0.25m	0.22m	0.25m	0.22m	0.25m	0.22m	0.20m	0.23m	0.25m	0.23m
Subsoil depth	0.16m	0.20m	0.18m	0.21m	0.22m	0.22m	0.23m	0.13m	flood	flood
Top of Natural substratum	0.41m	0.42m	0.43m	0.43m	0.47m	0.44m	0.43m	0.36m	flood	flood
Base of trench	0.48m	0.50m	0.52m	0.52m	0.56m	0.57m	0.53m	0.49m	0.48m	0.49m

Trench 06

No features were revealed within this trench.

Interval from SE	0-3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m	24m	27m	To NW end 30m
Ground (OD)	111.27m									
Topsoil depth	0.27m	0.22m	0.23m	0.21m	0.22m	0.26m	0.25m	0.21m	0.25m	0.25m
Subsoil depth	0.23m	0.22m	0.22m	0.22m	0.23m	0.26m	0.27m	0.28m	0.25m	0.16m
Top of Natural substratum	0.50m	0.44m	0.45m	0.43m	0.45m	0.52m	0.52m	0.49m	0.50m	0.41m
Base of trench	0.64m	0.60m	0.50m	0.52m	0.51m	0.59m	0.64m	0.62m	0.55m	0.52m

Trench 07

A single field drain ran across the trench from north-west to south-east.

Interval from S	0-3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m	24m	27m	To N end 30m
Ground (OD)	110.07m									
Topsoil depth	0.21m	0.20m	0.22m	0.23m	0.24m	0.20m	0.20m	0.24m	0.26m	0.20m
Subsoil depth	0.15m	0.21m	0.22m	0.22m	0.17m	0.13m	0.19m	0.13m	0.12m	0.13m
Top of Natural substratum	0.36m	0.41m	0.44m	0.45m	0.41m	0.33m	0.39m	0.37m	0.38m	0.33m
Base of trench	0.42m	0.50m	0.56m	0.50m	0.49m	0.40m	0.42m	0.39m	0.45m	0.48m

Trench 08

A single field drain ran across the trench from north-west to south-east.

Interval from E	0-3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m	24m	27m	To W end 30m
Ground (OD)	108.10m									
Topsoil depth	0.23m	0.23m	0.22m	0.25m	0.25m	0.24m	0.30m	0.24m	0.23m	0.30m
Subsoil depth	0.19m	0.22m	0.23m	0.18m	0.22m	0.28m	0.15m	0.30m	0.29m	0.34m
Top of Natural substratum	0.42m	0.45m	0.45m	0.43m	0.47m	0.52m	0.45m	0.54m	0.52m	0.64m
Base of trench	0.50m	0.53m	0.56m	0.52m	0.59m	0.69m	0.50m	0.69m	0.69m	0.80m



Figure 12: Trench 08, post-excavation, looking west

Trench 09

No features were revealed within this trench.

Interval from NW	0-3m	6m	9m	12m	15m	18m	21m	24m	27m	To SE end 30m
Ground (OD)	106.85m									
Topsoil depth	0.22m	0.19m	0.19m	0.25m	0.20m	0.24m	0.27m	0.22m	0.23m	0.25m
Subsoil depth	0.18m	0.20m	0.19m	0.24m	0.30m	flood	flood	flood	flood	flood
Top of Natural substratum	0.40m	0.39m	0.38m	0.49m	0.50m	flood	flood	flood	flood	flood
Base of trench	0.50m	0.48m	0.49m	0.58m	0.60m	0.63m	0.70m	0.71m	0.64m	0.60m

Discussion and Conclusion

The site at Lutterworth Road, Burbage had some potential for archaeological remains, lying 400m-500m east of Iron Age and Roman field systems; with a Bronze Age cremation cemetery and several findspots for prehistoric artefacts in the general vicinity of the town.

However, the geophysical survey carried out in advance of the trial trench evaluation was largely negative with only a few possible anomalies highlighted during the survey, as well as ridge and furrow earthworks, still visible in parts of the site, including Field 1.

Two trenches; Trench 02 and Trench 08 were placed across possible features, a linear and a possible ring ditch respectively, with others placed across other areas to provide coverage of the site. Most of the nine trenches were negative, revealing a rich topsoil and a surprisingly deep subsoil despite the land being mainly put over to pasture, with some field drains and a sub-stratum mainly consisting of poorly drained clay mixed with patches of gravel. Recording and backfilling of the trenches was somewhat hindered by the poor drainage, exacerbated by heavy rain.

Only three trenches (Trenches 01, 02 and 04) contained features, with the feature in Trench 01 clearly modern in origin, being cut from virtually the top of the trench and containing modern brick and building rubble. This feature corresponds with a small enclosure, with a pair of small outhouses, shown on the early editions of the Ordnance Survey maps dating from 1888-1970 but not on the later editions. The presence of the field boundary here and the outhouse would explain the modern cut and the brick infill within this feature.

A wide feature (1) in Trench 02, over 4m wide, and 0.44m deep was difficult to define; a widening of the trench around the same area did not reveal more of the feature, although pieces of field drain were found in the deposit as well as a section at the eastern end of the trench. This suggests the feature is likely to be associated with the field drain; possibly a large furrow with a drain cut along the eastern side. The position of the feature does correspond with a short linear anomaly picked up by the geophysical survey.

A further feature (2) was revealed in Trench 04 along a similar alignment to feature (2) (see Fig. 13). This was fairly shallow (0.18m deep) and very diffuse similar to the subsoil suggesting that it was most likely a furrow. It certainly follows the alignment of the furrows as recorded by the geophysical survey.

Trench 08 excavated over the ring shaped anomaly, highlighted on the geophysical survey, was negative but for two field drains; it is possible that the survey had picked up part of the drain system in the field, which had then been interpreted as a more discreet feature.

As only part of the area was evaluated is likely that further work will be necessary. Further evaluation trenches may reveal archaeological features that were not picked up in the geophysical survey as well as clarifying the extent and nature of the undated linear features revealed during this evaluation.

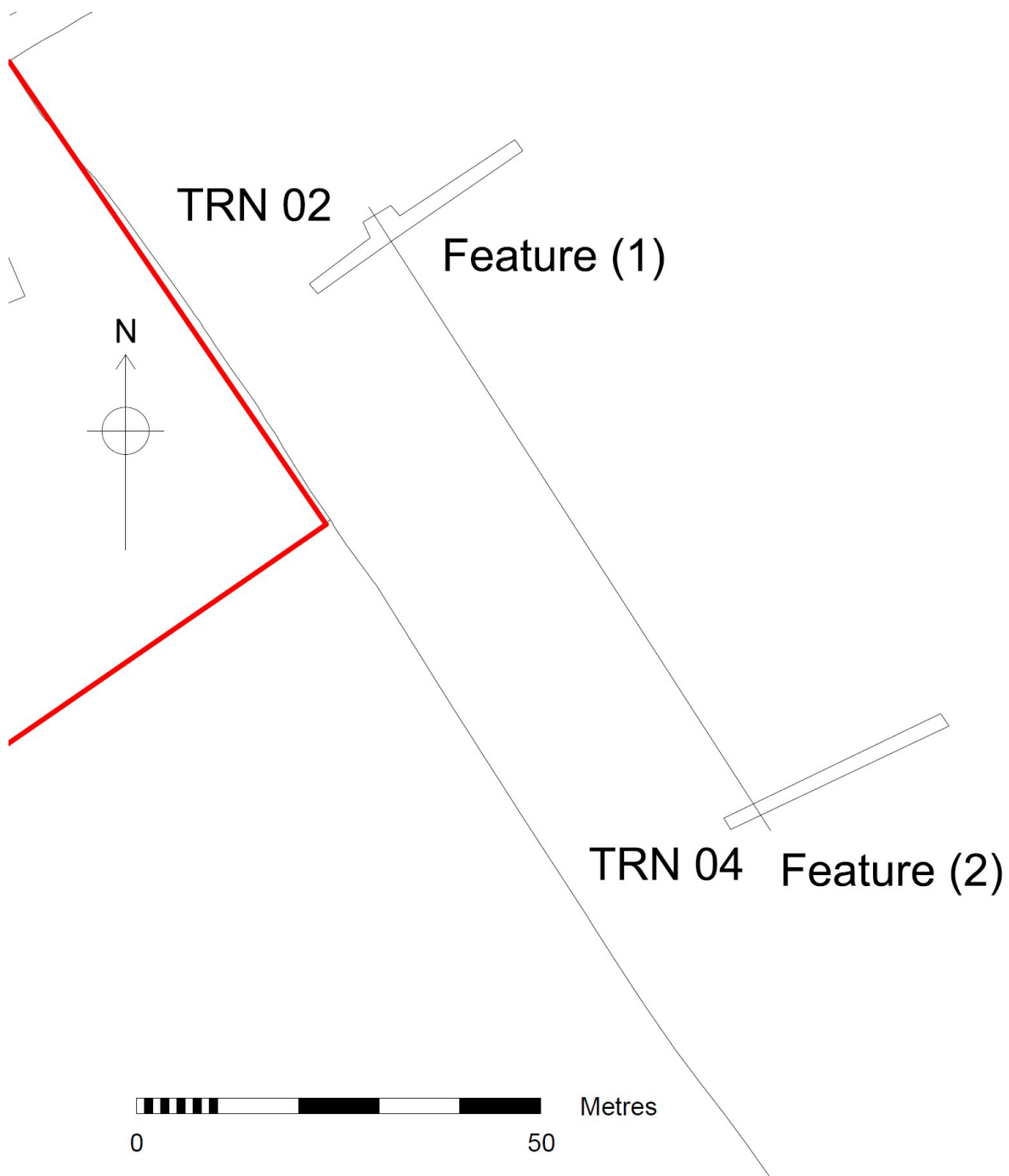


Figure 13: Plan of Trenches 02 and 04 showing alignment of features

Archive and publication

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A73.2019 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2019-149)
- 9 Trench recording sheets
- 1 Photo Record Sheet
- 1 Contact Sheet of digital photographs
- 1 CD of digital photographs
- 2 Context Sheets

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 Donald Sutherland and the Pegasus Group for the work, Planters for the hire of the JCB, which was driven by Paul Harris. Leon Hunt and Graham Murray undertook the fieldwork on behalf of ULAS. The project was managed by Vicki Score.

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Leon Hunt
ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel: 0116 252 2848
Fax: 0116 252 2614
lh90@le.ac.uk

12/11/2019 Revised 09/01/2020

Appendix 1: Post excavation photographs of trenches





UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
UK

Directors

Dr Richard Buckley OBE BA PhD FSA MCifA

e: rjb16@le.ac.uk

t: +44 (0)116 252 2848

f: +44 (0)116 252 2614

e: ulas@le.ac.uk

