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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation at Boots Farm,
Straight Mile, Bourton Heath,
Rugby CV23 9QQ**

Claire LaCombe & Nathan Flavell



**ULAS Report No 2020-123
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Site Name: Boots Farm, Straight Mile, Boughton Heath, Rugby CV23 9QQ

Grid Ref: SP 43185 71448

Author: Claire LaCombe & Nathan Flavell

Client: Mitchells Potatoes Ltd.

Planning Ref: R15/0620

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OASIS RECORD

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universil-402222		
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	Start/end dates	23/03/2020, 19/08/2020-20/08/2020		
	Previous/Future Work	None/ Not known		
	Project Type	Evaluation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Arable Farmland and working lorry park		
	Monument Type/Period	None		
	Significant Finds/Period	None		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Outline planning permission		
	Planning Ref.	R15/0620		
	PROJECT LOCATION	County	Leicestershire	
Site Address/Postcode		Boots Farm, Straight Mile, Bourton Heath, Rugby CV23 9QQ		
Study Area		5.6ha		
Site Coordinates		SP 43185 71448		
Height OD		110m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Rugby Borough Council		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Vicki Score		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Claire LaCombe & Nathan Flavell		
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An archaeological evaluation at Boots Farm, Straight Mile, Bourton Heath, Rugby CV23 9QQ

Claire LaCombe & Nathan Flavell

Summary

This document is a fieldwork report for an archaeological trial trench evaluation, carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in advance of the proposed development of the land Boots Farm, Straight Mile, Bourton Heath, Rugby CV23 9QQ (NGR: SP 43185 71448).

The work was commissioned by Mitchells Potatoes Ltd. The proposed development area lies within Bourton Heath, north of Bourton on Dunsmore in Rugby, on land occupied by Boots Farm. The site is currently arable farmland along with and associated commercial units / farm buildings and yard areas.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for the area lists several areas of interest within the site including a Bronze Age / Iron Age pit alignment and associated ditch enclosure.

Phase one was to comprise of five trenches within the arable fields with a second phase of three trenches focussing on the area within the farm yard. Only two trenches were fully excavated and a third partially opened prior to the general lockdown due to COVID-19, when the site was stopped and closed down. These trenches proved negative for archaeology.

Phase two involved excavating the remaining trenches across the site, however the location of one trench was unavailable and based on the negative results of the other trenches and in agreement with the Warwickshire Planning Archaeologist, this trench was not excavated.

The archive for the work will be deposited with Warwickshire County Council with accession number T/1827.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Mitchells Potatoes Ltd. to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation at Boots Farm, Straight Mile, Bourton Heath, Rugby, Warwickshire (NGR: SP 43185 71448).

Outline planning permission has been granted for the restructuring of existing industrial buildings at Boots Farm, including the demolition of redundant buildings, the construction of new buildings, the formation of a landscape bund and alterations to the existing access road (Rugby Borough Council Planning Application (R15/0620). Condition 10 relates to archaeological matters:

*No development shall commence unless and until:
A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a programme of archaeological evaluative work has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

b. The programme of archaeological evaluative work and associated post-excavation analysis, report production and archive deposition detailed within the approved WS and shall be undertaken. A report detailing the results of this fieldwork will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

c. An Archaeological Mitigation Strategy document (including a Written Scheme of Investigation for any archaeological fieldwork proposed) shall be submitted to an approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This should detail a strategy to mitigate the archaeological impact of the proposed development and should be informed by the results of the archaeological evaluation.

d. The development, and any archaeological fieldwork post-excavation analysis, publication of result and archive and deposition detailed in the Mitigation Strategy document, shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved Mitigation Strategy document.

Reason: In the interests of archaeology. (Archaeology Collective, 2018)

The work was undertaken on 31st March 2020 and 19-20 August 2020 and was carried out as part of a phased programme of archaeological work required by the Planning Authority following advice from the Warwickshire Planning Archaeologist in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, MHCLG 2019).

The work was intended to provide preliminary indications of the character and extent of any heritage assets in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains may be assessed by the Planning Authority.

Currently the site comprises of large arable fields with associated farm buildings and access routes.

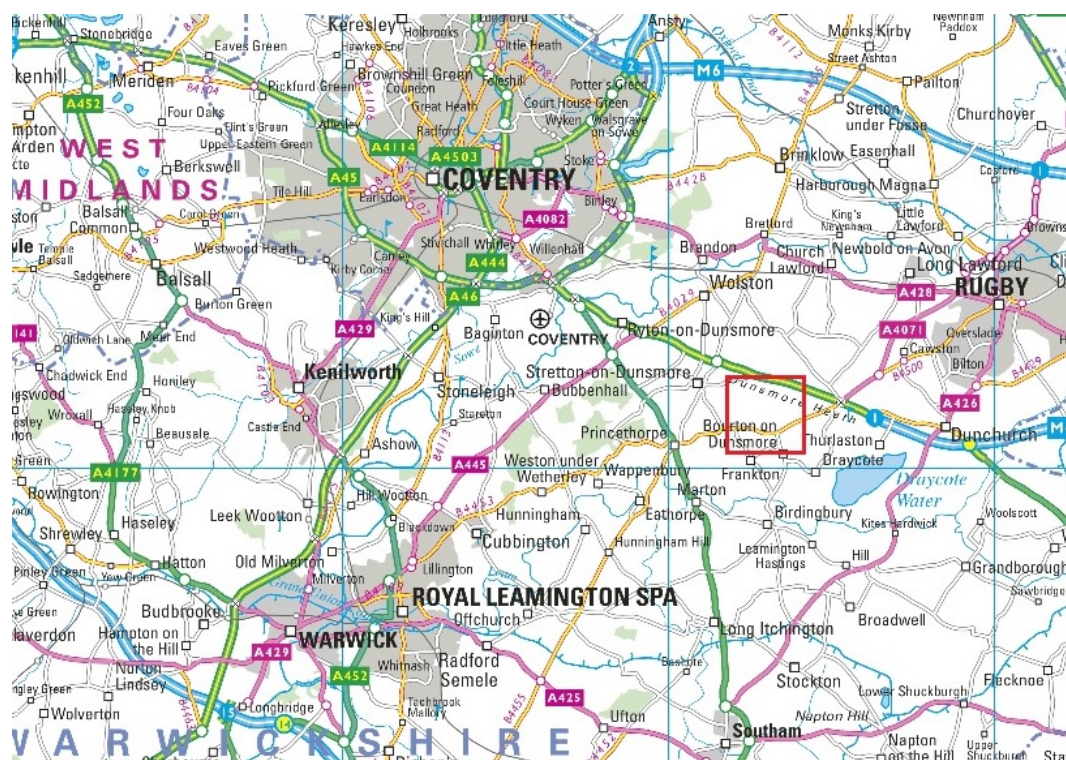


Figure 1: Site Location highlighted in red.

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Location and Geology

The site is located on the south western outskirts of Rugby *c.* 7.8km from the town centre, and *c.* 679m to the north of the village of Frankton. The site is within Bourton Heath, north of Bourton on Dunsmore. It is accessed by a private road which leads south to the B4453 and a small agricultural landholding to the north. Undeveloped agricultural land surrounds the site in all directions (Archaeology Collective, 2018), (Fig. 2).

The majority of the site comprises buildings and yards associated with Mitchells Potatoes Ltd as well as other industrial businesses, although the western part is formed by agricultural land and measures *c.* 5.6ha, including the access/haul road.

The land is generally level and lies at a height of approximately 110m aOD. The British Geological Survey website identifies the bedrock geology of the area as Rugby Limestone Member. The solid geology is overlain by superficial deposits of Dunsmore Gravel in the western half of the site and Bosworth Clay Member in the eastern half of the site.



Figure 2: Location of proposed area for development (Archaeology Collective, 2018)

Historical and Archaeological Background

The following is summarised from the WSI (Fig 3):

Prehistoric (Bronze Age and Iron Age)

A pit alignment and ditch which may form a boundary of Bronze Age (1,800 – 600 BC) or Iron Age date (600 BC – 410 AD) (**MWA7372**) and an enclosure which dates to the middle Iron Age (**MWA7373**).

Roman

There are two findspots where artefacts have been recovered by metal detecting (**MWA21783** & **MWA21876**).

Medieval

Evidence of early medieval activity (AD 410 – AD 1066) within the study area is also limited to the findspots of material which were also found during metal detecting (**MWA21684** & **MWA21948**).

There is more substantial evidence of medieval activity (AD 1066 – AD 1485) within the study area, although this is still limited with five assets having been recorded. The possible site of a shrunken medieval settlement (**MWA3327**) is located approximately 743m to the south east of the site and the remains of the village are visible as earthworks. Further medieval settlements, of Bourton on Dunsmore, located c.583m to the south of the site, (**MWA9495**) and Frankton, located c.980m to the south west of the site, (**MWA9515**), have also been recorded within the study area; the extent of which has been interpreted from aerial photographs and the First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) (1886) map. The Church of St. Peter (**MWA3321**), also a Grade II listed building (List entry: 1185250) was established during the medieval period although it was latterly largely restored. The final asset of medieval date is the findspot of artefacts (**MWA21686**) found c.790m to the south west of the site.

Post Medieval

There are eight assets which date to the post medieval period (AD 1486 – AD 1800) recorded within the study area. These include the site of Bourton Manor House (**MWA3320**) which once stood in the centre of the village, c.1km to the south of site, a smithy shown on historic mapping (**MWA3325**) and the site of a lime kiln (**MWA3116**). The formal gardens, including terraces and pool, to Bourton Hall (a Grade II listed building, ref: 1034968) survive in outline. There is also parkland to south and east of the hall (**MWA12629**) and the former Roman Catholic (**MWA3319**) is located at right angles to the hall and is included its listing designation. Number 4 Main Street (**MWA29625**), located c.837m to the south of the site, is also a Grade II listed building (List entry: 1034967) and is a 17th or 18th century timber framed building. The final two assets of post medieval date are the findspots of artefacts (**MWA21614** & **MWA21685**).

Modern

There is one asset of modern date (AD 1800 – Present) recorded within the study area; the site of a remote transmitting station (**MWA10230**) and is located c.342m to the south of the site.

Unknown date

There are 15 assets of unknown date recorded within the study area which indicates that there is insufficient dating evidence to ascribe them to a relevant period. These comprise undated cropmark evidence of enclosures, linear and curvilinear features. The shapefile provided by the HER associated with two of these assets, the cropmark of linear feature and of a sub-rectangular enclosure surrounding a smaller enclosure or ring ditch (**MWA3328** & **MWA5395**) extends into the south eastern corner of the site.

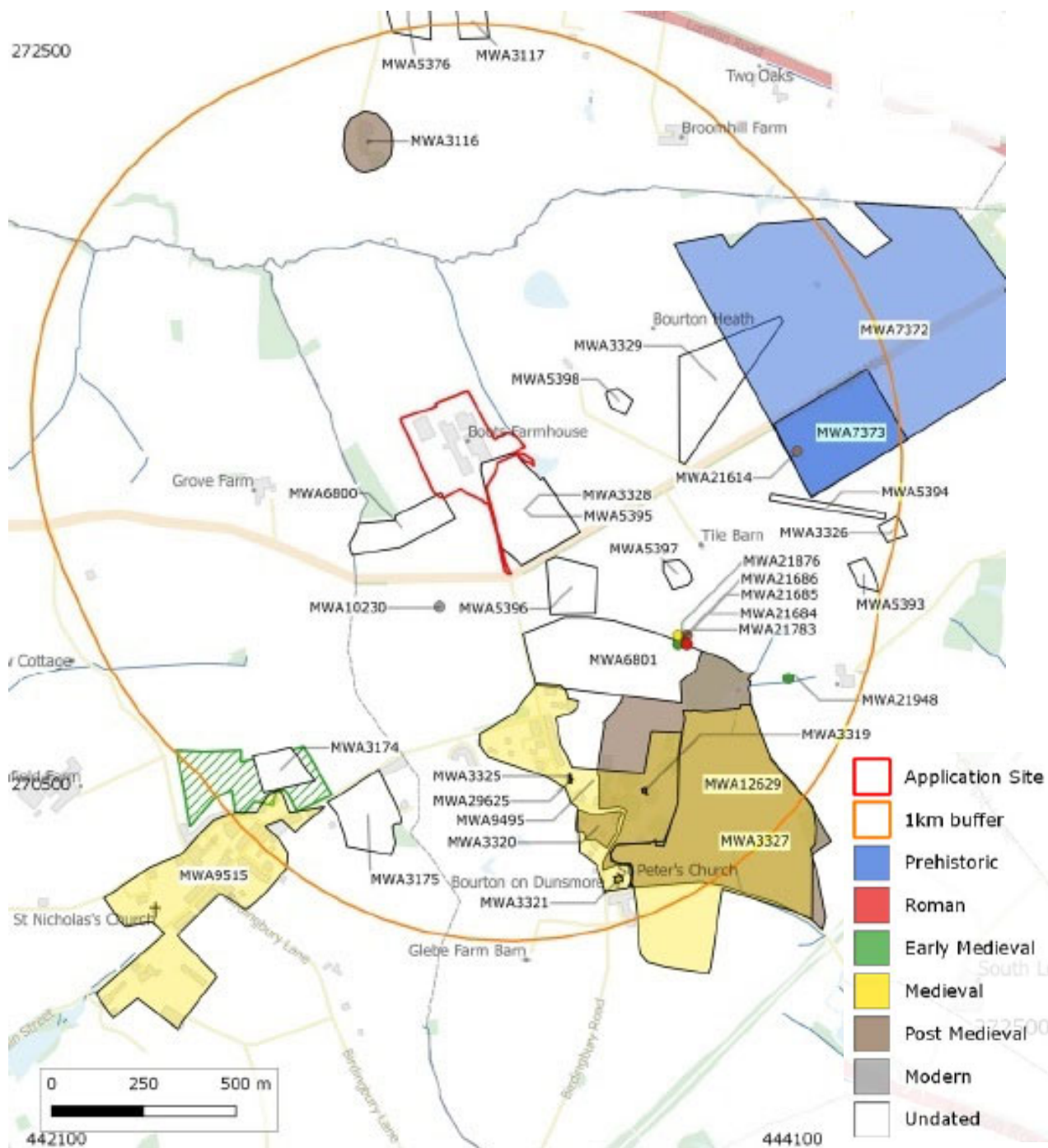


Figure 3: Plan of HER data. Scale 500m. (Archaeology Collective, 2018)

Previous archaeological events

The HER also holds records for eight previous archaeological investigations within the study area; the results of the English Heritage Mapping Project extend into the site (EWA9109). Of the remaining seven event records; two relate to watching briefs, two to buildings surveys and one instance of fieldwalking, one instance of evaluation excavation and one of archaeological observation.

Cartographic Evidence

The 1887 Ordnance Survey (OS) map shows the majority of the site as undeveloped agricultural fields which surrounds a small agricultural landholding. There is little change shown on later historic mapping although the small landholding is named as 'Boots' on the 1905 OS map. The 1955 OS map shows an increase to the farm but still shows as it as being surrounded by agricultural land. The increase in the buildings surrounding the farm which is most recognisable to the current form of the site is not shown until the 1990s mapping.

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project has characterised the majority of the site as a farm complex, although a small portion of the western part of the site has been characterised as large rectilinear fields. The majority of the study area has been characterised as areas related to the agricultural nature of the landscape.

Archaeological Objectives

The general aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains,
- To record the character, date location and preservation of any archaeological remains on site,
- To record the nature and extent of any previous damage to archaeological deposits or remains on site.

The specific aims of the investigation were:

- To mechanically excavate trenches to expose the surface of any underlying archaeological horizon or the natural ground,
- To clean the base and representative sections of the trenches and record them in both plan and representative section,
- To partially excavate any identified archaeological features so as to ascertain their extent, form, function and where possible date,
- To inform the need (or otherwise) for any future archaeological works on the site by means of an illustrated report.

The results of the evaluation will provide information in order for the local planning authority to make informed recommendations and to identify an appropriate mitigation strategy for the proposed development. Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation is to verify the geophysical survey and establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits identified on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

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. 2020). The archaeological work followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation (Archaeological Evaluation)*, *Boots Farm, Straight Mile, Rugby*. Prepared by Archaeology Collective and agreed with the Planning Archaeologist. The work was monitored by the Warwickshire County Council Planning Archaeologist.

An accession number (T/1827) was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts.

Phase 1

It was planned that the Phase 1 would comprise of five trenches (trenches 1,5,6,7, and 8), easily accessible within arable farmland. The remaining three trenches would be excavated at a later once buildings had been demolished and areas cleared (Fig. 4).

Phase one was however, brought to an abrupt standstill due to the restrictions enforced by the presence of COVID-19. Only two trenches had been fully excavated and recorded (Trenches 7 and 8), with a third (Trench 1) measured out and only partially excavated.

Phase 2

The second phase of work as carried out between 19-20th August 2020 when it was planned to excavate the remaining 5 trenches (Trenches 1-5). However, Trench 2 was constrained by parked lorry trailers and had to be reduced in length and Trench 3 lay within an occupied barn and was not accessible for trenching. Following a site visit with the Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire it was agreed that Trench 3 need not be excavated if the other trenches were negative for archaeological features.

excavation of the trenches was carried out using a tracked eight tonne excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide ditching bucket, under constant supervision by an experienced archaeologist.

Trenches were excavated to the level of the natural sub-stratum or to archaeological layers, whichever the higher in the sequence.



Figure 4: Proposed trench plan (provided by client)

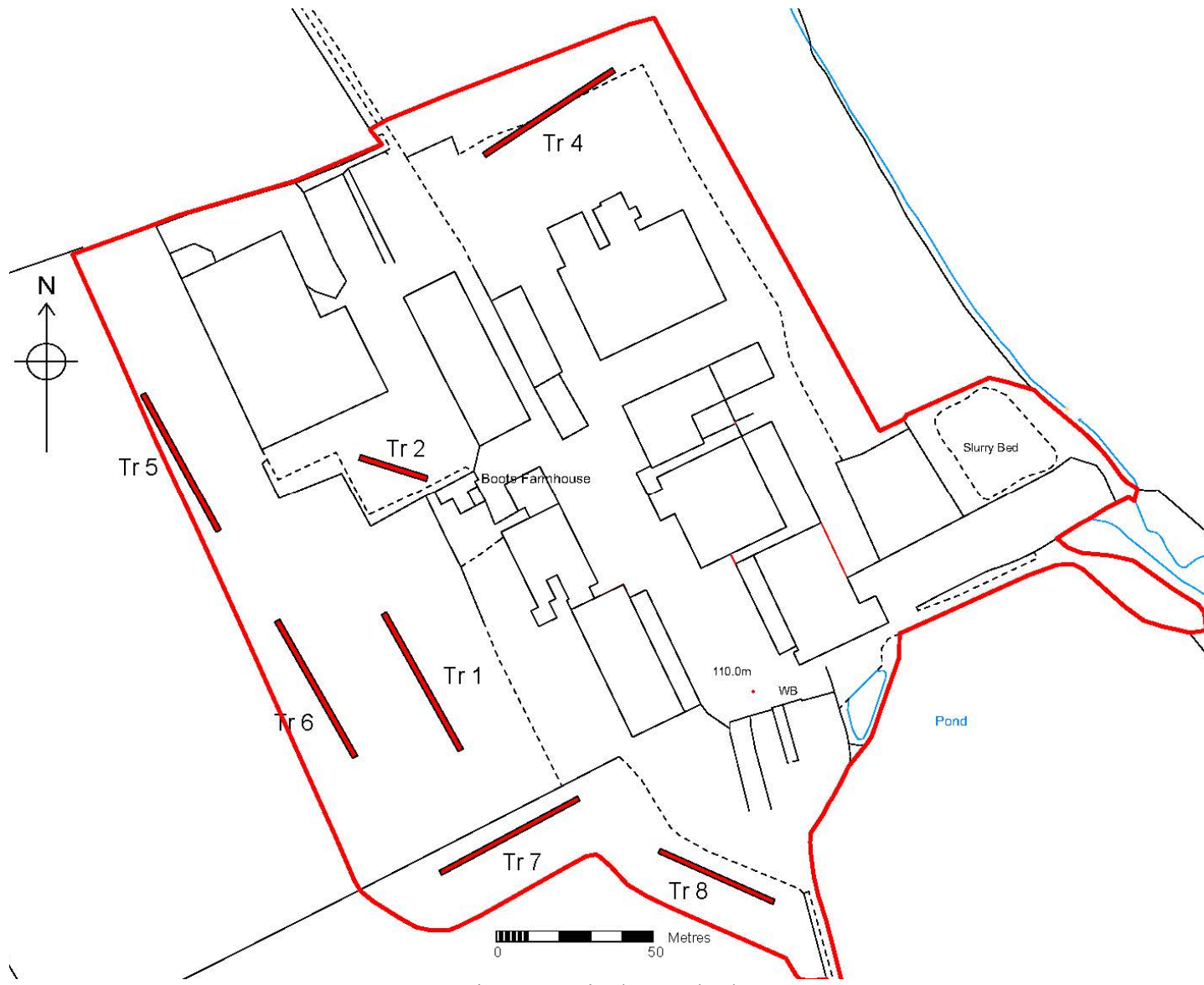


Figure 5: Final Trench plan

Phase 1 Results - Claire La Combe

Trench 7

Trench 7 was located as planned within an arable field to the south west of the site (Fig. 6). At the time there was no crop in the field, and it had not been seeded. The trench was parallel to a hedgerow field boundary and approximately 5m to the south of it.

The topsoil was dark brown sandy clay loam containing >10% small smooth pebbles and sharp flint fragments approximately 0.2 – 0.35m deep. The subsoil was orange/brown in colour comprising of a sandy clay soil with small stone inclusions varying in depth

The natural substrata was reached at a minimum depth of 0.4m towards the eastern end of the trench. At the western end, the natural substrata was much deeper at 1.03m due to the presence of a large wooden telegraph pole and the disturbed ground associated with it. It comprised of very sandy/gritty bright orange ironstone with some smooth patches of grey and bright orange clay (Fig. 7). This trench was negative for archaeology.

Trench 7							
Interval (m) from west end	0.0	10.0	20.0	30.0	40.0	50.0	To east end
Topsoil depth	0.35	0.18	0.23	0.26	0.22	0.26	
Subsoil depth	0.65	0.45	0.30	0.22	0.19	0.38	
Top of natural	1.0	0.63	0.53	0.48	0.4	0.64	
Base of trench	1.03	0.65	0.56	0.5	0.4	0.66	



Figure 6: Photograph looking west showing the area of trench 7 prior to excavation.



Figure 7: Photograph looking north along trench 7. Negative for archaeology. Scale 1.0m

Trench 8

Trench 8 was located close to the driveway entrance to Boots Farm at the south of the site (Fig. 8). The trench was placed approximately 5m from a small curving embankment / bund which was adjacent to the edge of the driveway. The trench was aligned north west – south east in the same field as trench 7 and was 40m in length (Fig. 9).

As with Trench 7, the topsoil was dark brown sandy clay loam containing >10% small smooth pebbles and sharp flint fragments approximately 0.2 – 0.35m deep. The subsoil was orange/brown in colour comprising of a sandy clay soil with small stone inclusions varying in depth

The natural substrata was reached at a minimum depth of 0.45m, but was fairly flat and consistent throughout the length of the trench. It comprised of very sandy/gritty bright orange ironstone with some smooth patches of grey and bright orange clay. This trench was negative for archaeology.

Interval (m) from northwest end	0.0	10.0	20.0	30.0	40.0	To south east end
Topsoil depth	0.30	0.28	0.30	0.33	0.36	
Subsoil depth	0.20	0.18	0.17	0.15	0.05	
Top of natural	0.5	0.46	0.47	0.48	0.4	
Base of trench	0.50	0.5	0.5	0.50	0.45	



Figure 8: Photograph looking northwest at the location of trench 8 prior to excavation.



Figure 9: Photograph looking north west along trench 8. Scale 1.0m.

Phase 2 Results – Nathan Flavell

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in an arable field to the west of the farmyard and was aligned north-west – south-east, measuring 50m x 1.8m (Fig. 10). The topsoil was dark brown sandy clay loam, 0.17-0.3m thick with small pebbles.

The natural substratum, a mixed orange gravelly sand with patches of grey sand was identified at a depth of between 0.28-0.4m deep. Subsoil was orange-brown silty sand with patches of sandy clay and manganese fragments, 0.06-0.12m thick.

A possible furrow was identified aligned north-east to south-west along with a parallel field drain. No other archaeological features were identified.

OD Height: 110.2m	(NE) 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m	35m	40m	45m	50m (SE)
Topsoil depth	0.26	0.2	0.2	0.22	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.27	0.25	0.2
Subsoil depth	0.13	0.1	0.11	0.1	0.1	0.12	0.09	0.1	0.06	0.09	0.08
Top of natural	0.39	0.3	0.31	0.32	0.3	0.32	0.39	0.4	0.33	0.34	0.28
Base of trench	0.48	0.4	0.4	0.42	0.38	0.37	0.42	0.43	0.37	0.37	0.32



Figure 10: Trench 1 looking north-west. Scale 1.0m.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was in an area of hardstanding for parked trailers. It was aligned north-west – south-east, measuring 22.5m x 1.8m (Fig. 11). The natural substratum, a mixed orange gravelly sand was identified at a depth of between 0.18-0.33m deep. There was no subsoil or topsoil in this area and it appears that the yard had been levelled prior to hardcore being deposited to provide hardstanding. The natural was overlain by the hardcore layer consisting of a mixed brown clay loam with brick and concrete inclusions, 0.18-0.33m thick. A modern posthole was observed at each end of the trench as well as a metal pipe trench.

OD Height: 108m	(NW) 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m (SE)
Hardcore depth	0.18	0.18	0.26	0.33	0.3
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-
Depth of natural	0.18	0.18	0.26	0.33	0.3
Base of trench	0.24	0.26	0.33	0.46	0.53



Figure 11: Trench 2 looking south-east. Scale 1.0m.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located in the north-east corner of the site in an area of hardstanding and was aligned north-east – south-west, measuring 49m x 1.8m (Fig. 12). As with Trench 2 there was no topsoil or subsoil with hardcore lying on top of the natural substrata. The natural substratum, a yellow-orange sand with gravel and yellow clay patches was identified at a depth of between

0.23-0.5m deep. This was overlain by a hardcore layer consisting of a mixed brown clay loam with brick and concrete inclusions, 0.23-0.5m thick. There appears to be some contamination of leaked substances in the natural.

OD Height: 107m	(NE) 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m	35m	40m	45m	49m (SW)
Hardcore depth	0.23	0.4	0.3	0.44	0.35	0.35	0.37	0.35	0.5	0.3	0.3
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Depth of natural	0.23	0.4	0.3	0.44	0.35	0.35	0.37	0.35	0.5	0.3	0.3
Base of trench	0.26	0.4	0.35	0.52	0.35	0.4	0.41	0.4	0.53	0.3	0.6



Figure 12: Trench 4 looking north-east.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was in the same arable field as Trench 1 and aligned south-east – north-west, measuring 50m x 1.8m (Fig. 13). The topsoil was dark brown sandy clay loam, 0.17-0.3m thick with small pebbles. Beneath this was a brown silty sand subsoil with patches of sandy clay and manganese fragments, 0.08-0.16m thick.

The natural substratum, a mixed orange gravelly sand with patches of grey sand was identified at a depth of between 0.26-0.4m deep. Several darker patches of silty clay were tested by excavation. In all cases these were identified as geological in nature. A series of possible furrows were identified aligned northeast-southwest along with a parallel field drain.

OD Height: 107m	(SE) 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m	35m	40m	45m	50m (NW)
Topsoil depth	0.26	0.17	0.26	0.24	0.2	0.18	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.26	0.2
Subsoil depth	-	0.12	-	0.08	0.15	0.12	0.09	0.1	0.1	0.12	0.16
Depth of natural	0.26	0.29	0.26	0.32	0.35	0.3	0.29	0.3	0.4	0.38	0.36
Base of trench	0.37	0.45	0.36	0.31	0.36	0.33	0.33	0.37	0.4	0.42	0.44



Figure 13: Trench 5 looking northwest. Scale 1.0m.

Trench 6

Trench 6 lay in the same field as and to the south of Trench 5 and was aligned north-east – south-west, measuring 50m x 1.8m (Fig. 14). The topsoil was dark brown sandy clay loam, 0.2-0.3m thick with small pebbles. Beneath this was a brown silty sand subsoil with patches of sandy clay and manganese fragments 0.04-0.16m thick.

The natural substratum, a mixed orange gravelly sand with patches of grey sand was identified at a depth of between 0.26-0.4m deep. Two patches of darker grey sand were tested by excavation and proved to be geological. No features were identified.

OD Height: 110m	(NE) 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m	35m	40m	45m	50m
Topsoil depth	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.26	0.28	0.26	0.2	0.3	0.26	0.3	0.2
Subsoil depth	0.12	0.16	0.11	0.14	0.08	0.09	0.13	0.08	0.04	0.07	0.1
Depth of natural	0.32	0.36	0.31	0.4	0.36	0.35	0.33	0.38	0.3	0.37	0.3
Base of trench	0.42	0.4	0.37	0.42	0.36	0.35	0.38	0.4	0.42	0.4	0.4



Figure 14: Trench 6 looking north-west. Scale 1.0m.

Discussion and Conclusion

The excavated trenches did not uncover any archaeological features other than evidence for ploughing and modern development. The trenches in the fields all had a similar stratigraphy and the presence of furrows and land drains is consistent with the area being used as farmland.

The trenches within the farmyard suggests that the area had been levelled removing the topsoil and subsoil in this area prior to hardcore being deposited to create a solid yard surface.

A site visit was undertaken on 19th August between ULAS, Heritage Collective and the Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire. It was agreed that if the remaining trenches were negative that Trench 3 need not be excavated. The lack of archaeology in the other trenches was confirmed along with photos by email, before the trenches were backfilled.

Archive and publication

The archive for this project will be deposited with Warwickshire County Council with accession number T/1827 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2020-123)
- 7 Trench recording sheets
- 2 Photo Record sheet
- 2 Contact sheets 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

Heritage Collective monitored the project on behalf of the client, Mitchells Potatoes Ltd. Claire LaCombe and Nathan Flavell carried out the trial trenching for ULAS and the project was managed by Vicki Score. The excavator was provided by Planters of Leicester.

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