

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
between Thurlaston Lane and  
Leicester Road, Earl Shilton,  
Leicestershire  
(SP 453 964 – SP 476 991)**

**Dan Stone**

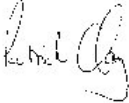
**For: Murphy Pipelines**

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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief between Thurlaston Lane and Leicester Road, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire (SP 453 964 – SP 476 991)**

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### **1. Summary**

*An Archaeological watching brief was undertaken by ULAS on behalf of Murphy pipelines during groundwork for the construction of a new works compound and adjacent land clearance along the route of the A47 by-pass main gas pipeline diversion, on land adjacent to the northern end of the Earl Shilton bypass, Leicestershire. The construction involved the stripping of topsoil and subsoil and the reduction and levelling of the site area with construction of an access route onto the main adjacent Earl Shilton bypass, followed by excavation of slit trenches for the laying of a gas pipeline. Attendance at the site commenced on the 24th of June 2008 and finished on the 30th of June 2008. No significant archaeological finds or deposits were observed during groundworks. The archive is to be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under accession number X.A94.2008*

### **2. Introduction**

This report presents the results of a watching brief on behalf Murphy Pipelines, during construction of a site compound and adjacent ground clearance at the northern end of the Earl Shilton by-pass associated with the A47 gas pipeline diversion. This was in preparation for the construction of a new section of an existing sub-surface main gas pipeline route across the cleared ground, which currently runs across the route of the proposed Earl Shilton by-pass from the A47 Leicester Road (SP 453 964) to the south-west to Thurlaston Lane (SP 476 991) to the north-east. The route crosses a series of arable and pasture fields. At the point of traversing the new bypass a diversion in the route of the pipeline was required. This involved levelling of the ground, prior to excavation of a minimum 2.5m deep and 1m wide slit trench to house the main gas pipeline to be constructed on site by National Grid.

Archaeological survey and evaluation has been undertaken for parts of the route (ULAS Reports 2002-213; 2003-001, 2003-023 and 2003-068) and excavations were undertaken north of Mill Lane (Site D), Elmsthorpe (Site A) and watching briefs during stripping of site compounds and some of the main route (reports in preparation). A further walkover survey was undertaken in April 2007. Following on from this earlier work, ULAS was requested to attend the groundworks for the diversion of the national grid main gas pipeline at the northern end of the bypass route (SP 477 985).

Attendance commenced on the 24th of June 2008 and upon arrival, it was agreed with the client to inspect the cleared ground following completion of the reduction of the four fields through which the new gas pipeline diversion passed. Therefore three further visits were arranged for the 25th, 27th and 30th of June 2008, and it was agreed, following discussion with the Senior Planning Archaeologist, to have intermittent rather than comprehensive attendance on site.



Figure 1: Site location

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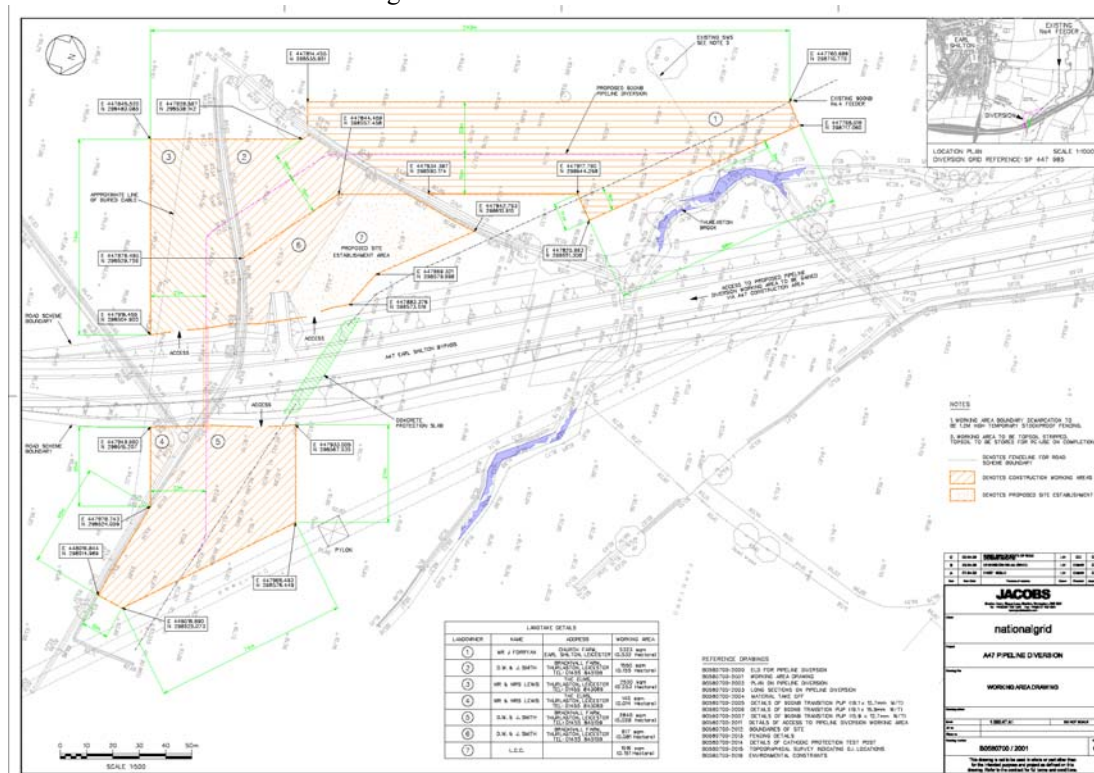


Figure 2: Location of groundworks in relation to the bypass (reproduced from plans supplied by Murphy Pipelines Original scale 1:500)

### **3. Site description, topography and geology**

The site is located west and towards the northern end of the Earl Shilton bypass, currently under construction (NGR SP 447 985). The ground is flat and comprises four arable and pasture fields along the alignment of the proposed gas pipeline diversion route, divided by mature hedgelines. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 155 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of sand and gravel overlying boulder clay.

### **4. Archaeological and Historical background**

The study area contains known archaeological sites from the prehistoric, Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods. A total of 17 archaeological sites are included in the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record and further work in connection with the Earl Shilton bypass and other projects has located further sites.

### **5. Aims and method.**

5.1 The aims through archaeological stripping and investigation were

1. To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
3. To produce an archive and report of any results.

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

#### **Methodology**

Potential archaeology will be identified through the archaeological supervision and observation of the stripping and removal of existing topsoil, the reduction of underlying subsoils and the performance of other groundworks by the client's contractors, and the observation and examination of the spoil removed for artefacts and where appropriate examination and recording of trench sections, groundwork and site setting.

All work and archaeological deposits encountered was recorded in accordance and follow the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, the standard policy and practice of ULAS and adherence to the University's Health and Safety policy.

Internal monitoring procedures were set up including provision for visits to the site by the project manager. These were to ensure that project targets were met and professional standards maintained. Provision was to be made for external monitoring meetings with the Senior Planning Archaeologist the Planning authority and the Client, as appropriate.

## **6. Results**

The author visited the site on the 24th, 25th, 27th and 30th of June 2008. The pipeline diversion passed through four fields between the two points of the original route, labelled field 1, field 2/6/7, field 3, field 4/5 (Figure 2). These were stripped in sequence and reduced to the subsoil with topsoil banked on site for subsequent re-turfing upon completion of the pipeline. Machining was carried out using a tracked 360 degree excavator with a 1 m toothless ditching bucket.

### ***Field 2/6/7***

Following discussion with the client's representative it was understood that some surface topsoil in the south of the first field, field 2/6/7, had been removed prior to archaeological attendance. Field 2/6/7 was reduced following completion of an access ramp from the side of the adjacent bypass, which provided access and egress to the site. Within this field were located the site office and associated temporary cabins, and hardcore standing areas for vehicles. The vegetative ground cover was removed and banked on site for later re-turfing. The topsoil was removed and banked on site for relaying subsequent to the pipeline completion. This was approximately 0.25m in depth comprising a dark grey-brown silty clay humic soil and turf. Incidental reduction of the subsoil occurred during this reduction and a series of east - west aligned ceramic field drains were observed within the field, set approximately 5m apart and parallel to each other. The natural substratum, where exposed, was a red brown clay. No other archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were observed.

### ***Field 3***

Following reduction and stripping of the topsoil and some subsoil within this field a walk over and observation of the spoil revealed no significant archaeological deposits or features. Sections along the edge of the field suggested the topsoil was a similar approximate to that in field 2/6/7. No associated archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were observed.

### ***Field 4/5***

Following reduction and stripping of the topsoil and some subsoil within this field a walk over and observation of the spoil revealed no significant archaeological deposits or features. Sections along the edge of the field suggested the topsoil was a similar approximate depth to that in field 2/6/7. No associated archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were observed.

### ***Field 7***

Following reduction and stripping of the topsoil and some subsoil within this field a walk over and observation of the spoil revealed no significant archaeological deposits or features. Sections along the edge of the field suggested the topsoil was similar to that observed in field 2/6/7. No associated archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were observed.

## **7. Conclusion.**

The topsoil across the site appears homogenous and archaeologically sterile forming a consistent depth of material with a uniform horizon with the underlying subsoil and boulder clay natural substratum. Observation of the removal and the reduced levels of the topsoil and subsoil across the fields and some incidental reduction of the subsoil down into the natural substratum suggest groundwork for the installation of new gas

pipelines along the diversion route would not have an impact on archaeological deposits. As no associated archaeological deposits, features or pre-modern artefacts were encountered during the watching brief an absence of surviving archaeological deposits is suggested.

## **8. Acknowledgements and publication**

I would like to thank the client Mr Greg Keenan of Murphy Pipelines and Mr Brian Robinson of the National Grid for their help and co-operation on site. The project was managed by Patrick Clay and the fieldwork was carried out by the author, Dan Stone both of ULAS. A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. The report has been added to the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) Online Access to the index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York.

## **9. Archive**

A full copy of the archive as defined in *The Guidelines For the Preparation Of Excavation Archives For Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990), and the *Standards In The Museum: Care Of Archaeological Collections* (MGC 1992) and *Guidelines for the Preparation of Site Archives and Assessments for all finds* (RFG/FRG) will usually be presented to within six months of the completion of fieldwork. This archive will include all records directly relating to the investigation undertaken.

The archive consists of 1 copy of this report, 3 watching brief recording forms, 1 copy of site location plan of A47 pipeline diversion, 2 photo index forms, 1 colour digital photo contact sheet, and 1 CD containing 52 digital photos. It will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council, under accession number X.A94.2008.

## **10 Bibliography**

- Coward, J., 2002 *A programme of non intrusive archaeological evaluation in advance of the proposed Earl Shilton bypass, Leicestershire SP 476 991 to SP 453 964* ULAS Report No. 2002-213
- MAP 2: *The management of archaeological projects* 2nd edition English Heritage 1991
- MGC 1992 *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* 1992 (Museums and Galleries Commission)
- RFG/FRG 1993 *Guidelines for the preparation of site archives* (Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group AD 700-1700 1993)
- SMA 1993 *Selection, retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections. Guidelines for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* 1993 (Society of Museum Archaeologists)

***Oasis***

<b>INFORMATION REQUIRED</b>	<b>EXAMPLE</b>
Project Name	Watching brief at Earl Shilton bypass of pipeline diversion.
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Dan Stone
Previous/Future work	Unknown
Current Land Use	Arable and Grazing pasture
Development Type	Subsurface pipeline lying with reversion to arable.
Reason for Investigation	PPG16
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	SP 477 985
Start/end dates of field work	24th , 25th , 27th and 30th of June 2008
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
<b>Study Area *</b>	Approx 1.5 h





Figure 3 : View of field area 1 from the south-east (see figure 2)



Figure 4: View of field area 4/5 from the south-west (see figure 2).



Figure 5: View of area 6/7 from the north-west (see figure 2).



Figure 6: View of area 2 from the south-east (see figure 2)



Figure 7: View of area 3 from the south-east (see figure 2)

