



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services



**An Archaeological Evaluation at
The Hollies, Ashby Parva,
Leicestershire**

NGR: SP 52703 88526


Gavin Speed

ULAS Report No 2010-166
©2010

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
The Hollies, Ashby Parva
(SP 52703 88526)**

Gavin Speed

For: Wells McFarlane

Approved by	
Signed: 	Date: 13/09/2010
Name: Vicki Score	

**University of Leicester
Archaeological Services**
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614
www.le.ac.uk/ulas

**ULAS Report Number 2010-166
©2010
Accession Number XA.167.2010.**

CONTENTS

Summary	2
1. Introduction.....	2
2. Site Description, Topography and Geology.....	2
3. Historical and Archaeological Background.....	3
4. Aims and Objectives	4
5. Methodology	4
6. Results.....	4
7. Discussion.....	12
8. Conclusion	12
9. Archive.....	13
10. Publication	14
11. Bibliography	14
12. Acknowledgements.....	14
Appendix I: Pottery Report.....	16
Appendix II: Plan of proposed development	18

FIGURES

Figure 1 Site location plan within the UK and county of Leicestershire.....	3
Figure 2: Site Location. 1:25000	3
Figure 3: Trench location plan, archaeological features shaded.....	5
Figure 4: Trench 1 plan and section.....	6
Figure 5: Cobble surface (11)	7
Figure 6: Detail of drain in cobble surface (11).....	7
Figure 7: Section through cobble surface (11).....	8
Figure 8: Trench 2 plan and sections	9
Figure 9: Trench 2, ditch [5].	10
Figure 10: Trench 4 plan and section.....	11
Figure 11: Ditch [3] within Trench 4.....	11

An Archaeological Evaluation at The Hollies, Ashby Parva, Leicestershire.

Gavin Speed

Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land to the rear of The Hollies, Main Street, Ashby Parva, Leicestershire (SP 52703 88526). The work was undertaken as part of an archaeological impact assessment in advance of a proposed development.

The evaluation revealed a post hole and a linear feature dated to the late Saxon period (c.850-1066) together with two further linear features which could be contemporary. These may indicate boundaries and structures relating to a medieval croft and toft fronting on to Main Street. A well made cobbled yard or road with surface drain was constructed after the late 13th century.

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services Section, accession no. XA.167.2010.

1. Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by ULAS for Wells McFarlane on 8th and 9th September 2010 on land to the rear of The Hollies, Main Street, Ashby Parva, Leicestershire (SP 52703 88526).

As a result of a pre-planning enquiry, an archaeological evaluation of the site was requested by Leicestershire County Council Historic and Natural Environment Team, as archaeological advisors to the planning authority. The work was required in order to assess the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits which might be present in order to determine the potential impact upon them from future development proposals.

This report presents the results of the trial trenching, with an assessment of the potential impact on buried archaeological remains from groundworks associated with future development.

2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

Ashby Parva lies in the Harborough District of Leicestershire, approximately 10 miles south of Leicester City centre and around 4 miles north of Lutterworth (Figure 1). The site lies on the south-western side of Main Street to the rear of 'The Hollies', which fronts Main Street (Figure 2).

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 169 Coventry indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Oadby Till, with underlying Pleistocene to recent sands and gravels (Wolston) and Wolston Clay. The site lies at approximately 138m above O.D

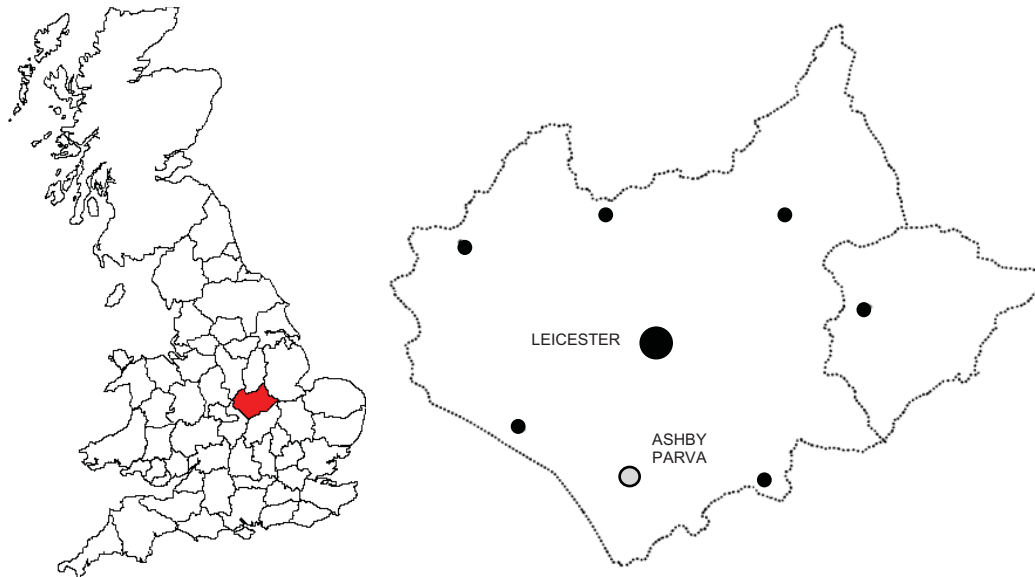


Figure 1 Site location plan within the UK and county of Leicestershire

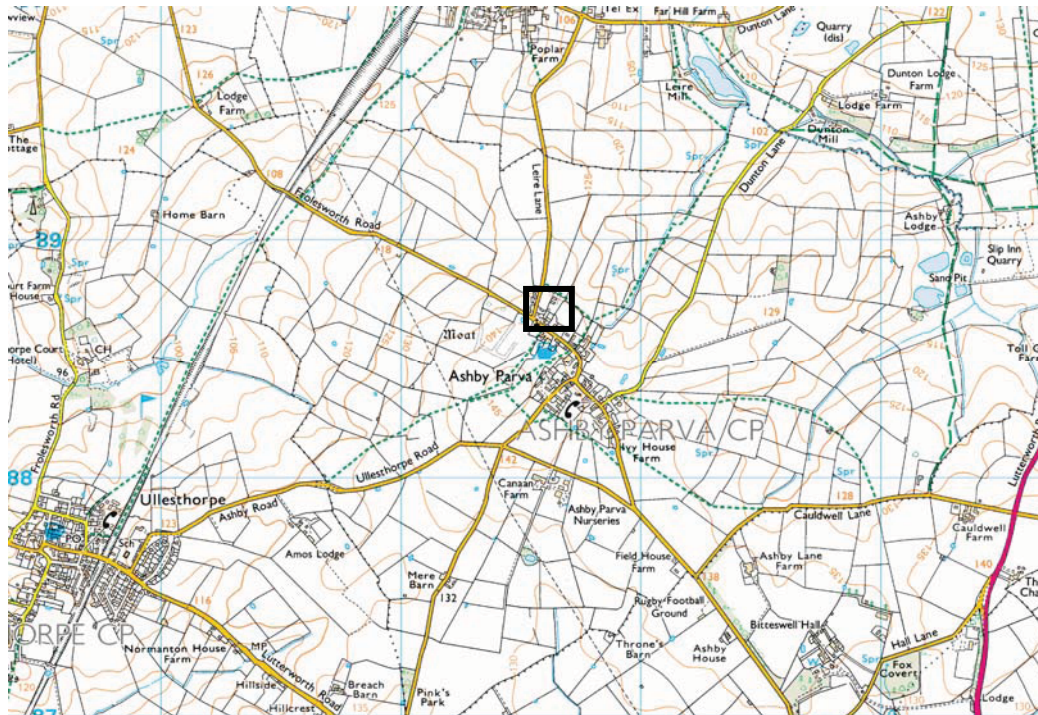


Figure 2: Site Location. (not to scale)

Reproduced from the Landranger 1:25000 series by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 2002. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10002186.

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

Ashby Parva appears in the Domesday Book as Parva Essebi, under the land of the French nobleman Robert of Bucy (Morris 1979). The village name is a common name in the North and Midlands, usually meaning 'farmstead or village where ash-trees grow'. Parva means 'little', as opposed to magna, meaning greater, such as the nearby Ashby Magna (Mills 2003). Domesday Book (1086) records that at the time of the Conquest there were two ploughs that worked and was one being built. The village is listed as containing six villagers, one smallholder who owned a plough, eight acres of meadow and a total value of ten shillings.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland shows that there are no known archaeological remains within the assessment area itself. However, it does show that the site lies within the medieval settlement core of the village (MLE9119) and that known medieval earthworks lie in the close vicinity. A series of earthworks associated with the shrunken village status of Ashby Parva were located adjacent to the site at Lammas Close (MLE1206). The area has subsequently been built upon. A larger group of earthworks lie around 200-300m west of the site (MLE1207). These consist of house platforms, with enclosures to the rear. Further earthworks are located around 200m east of the site on the opposite side of Main Street, to the north of Manor Farm (Hunt 2010).

4. Aims and Objectives

The principal aims of the archaeological evaluation were:

- To identify possible areas of archaeological potential liable to be threatened by the proposed development.
- To establish the location, extent, date, and significance of any archaeological deposits located.
- To define the quality and state of preservation of these deposits.
- To assess the local, regional and national importance of any deposits.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

The objective is to gain an indication of the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits which may be present in order that an informed planning decision can be taken.

5. Methodology

Prior to any machining of trial trenches, general photographs of the site areas were taken. The Senior Planning Archaeologist had requested the examination of a minimum of 120m² of trial trenches prior to determination of any planning application to develop the site (see Appendix II). Four 20m by 1.6m trenches were located to cover the areas of the development (Fig.3).

The trenches were excavated using a JCB mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and overlying layers were removed under full archaeological supervision until either the top of archaeology or the natural undisturbed substratum was reached. Trenches were examined for archaeological deposits or finds by hand cleaning, the trenches were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The trenches were backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation.

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (2008).

6. Results

Archaeological finds and features were identified in Trenches 1, 2, and 4; Trench 3 containing no archaeological evidence.

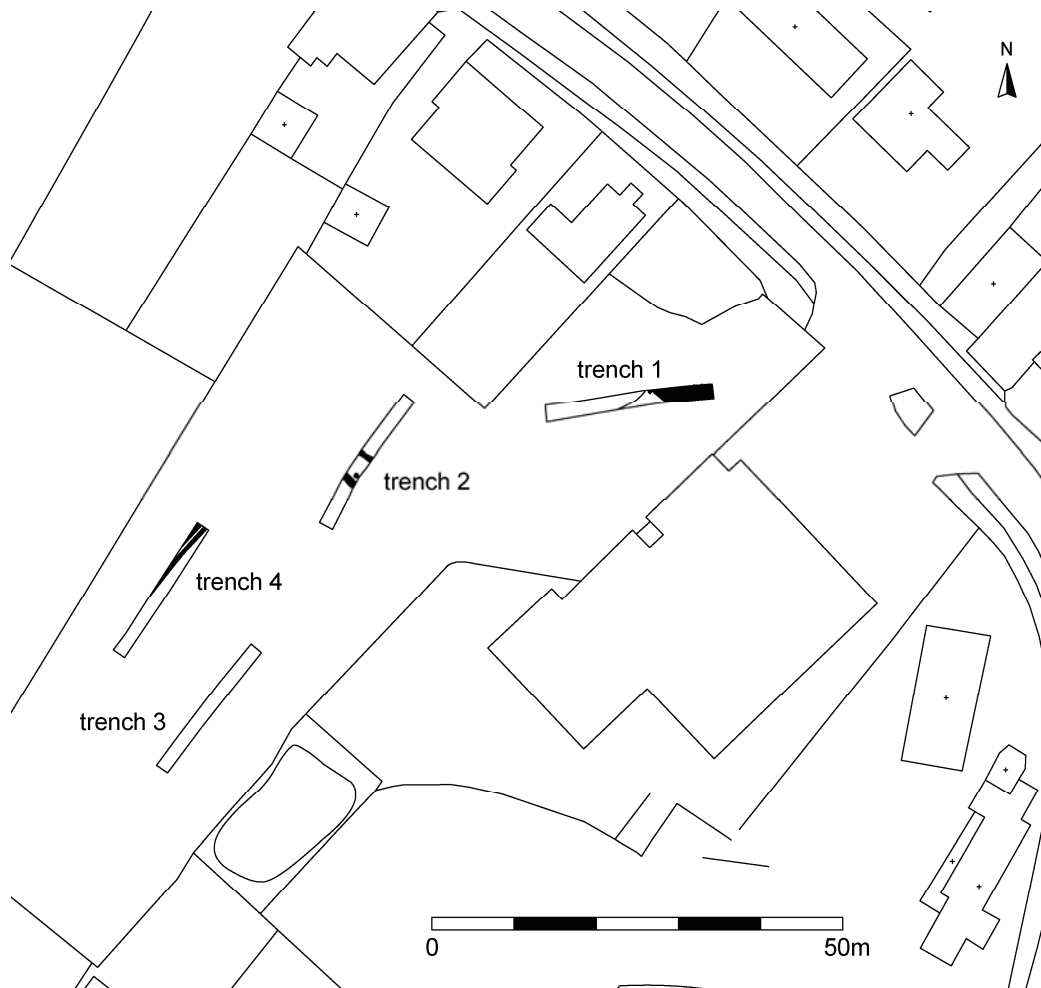


Figure 3: Trench location plan, archaeological features shaded.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located 12.5m back from Main Street, and was orientated east-west (Figure 3). The topsoil (1) consisted of a dark grey-brown clayey-silt *c.*0.4m thick which lay above a 0.55m thick deposit of yellow-brown silty-clay, with occasional angular pebbles (2). This in turn overlay a deep deposit of grey-brown clay-silt (15) that included leveling layers within it, from which a post-medieval brick fragment was recovered. This lay above a thin grey-brown clay-silt with a few flecks of charcoal (13) which contained nine sherds of pottery, eight of which dated to *c.*1250-1300 and one to *c.*1400-1550. This sealed a large, well-constructed, cobbled surface (11) at the east end of the trench (Figures 4-7) which had been cut by a modern linear intrusion. The cobbles were firmly packed together and a north-east to south-west orientated drain was incorporated into the surface (Figure 6). The latter contained a thin grey clay silt (14), which contained no finds. A sample area of the cobbled surface was hand-planned (Figure 4). It continued into the edge of the trench on the north, east, and west sides. The cobbles continued on the south side for 7.5m but at this end they were much looser suggesting some disturbance or removal may have taken place and that the surface originally perhaps continued further south (Figure 5). Under the surface, and spreading approximately 4m beyond its southern edge, was a

mid-grey silty-clay (12) which probably represents the clay foundation bonding into which the cobbles were set. This contained a single sherd of mid- to late 13th-century pottery. It may be significant that the edge marking the southern extent of the clay bonding for the surface is on a similar alignment to the surface drain and it is possible that this marks the original edge of the cobbling, perhaps adjacent to a building.

The natural substratum was reached *c.*0.8m below current ground level, 137.99m OD at the east-end, and 138.9m OD at the west-end. This consisted of yellow-orange sands and gravels.

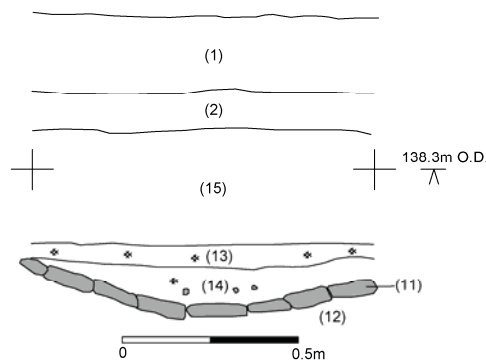
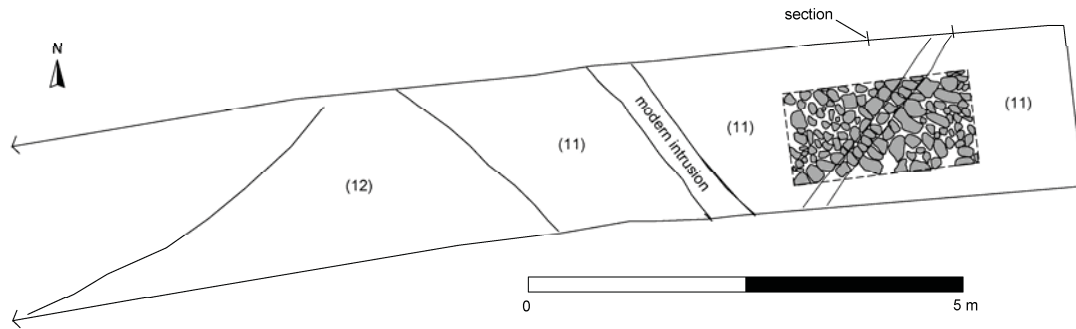


Figure 4: Trench 1 plan and section



Figure 5: Cobble surface (11), looking west (L) and east (R). Scale 2m x 1m



Figure 6: Detail of drain in cobble surface (11), looking south. 1m scale.



Figure 7: Section through cobble surface (11), showing clay bonding (12) below, overlying natural substratum below. Looking east, 0.3m scale.

Trench 2

The topsoil (1) consisted of a dark grey-brown clayey-silt approximately *c.*0.5m thick which lay above yellow-brown silty-clay, approximately 0.15m thick. Three archaeological features were identified and excavated in this trench and consisted of two linear features [5] and [7] and one circular feature [9] (Figures 8 and 9). Feature [5] was orientated north-west to south-east, and measured 0.8m wide, 0.3m deep with sharp sides and a flat base. It contained a light brown-grey silty-clay (6). This had a small amount of small charcoal flecks, small rounded pebbles, and no finds. Feature [7] was located 0.3m to the north-east of [5] and was circular in plan with sharp sides and a flat base. It contained a mid grey silty-clay and no finds. Feature [9] – like [5] – was orientated north-west to south-east and was 0.6m wide, 0.15m deep, with concave sides and flat base. It contained a firmly compacted mid-brown-grey silty-clay (10) from which came a single sherd of pottery dated to AD 850-1066. A layer of silty-clay (16) was located in the very south-east edge of the trench. The natural substratum consisted of a yellow-brown sands and gravels; it was reached *c.*0.55m below current ground level, 139.35 – 140.45m O.D.

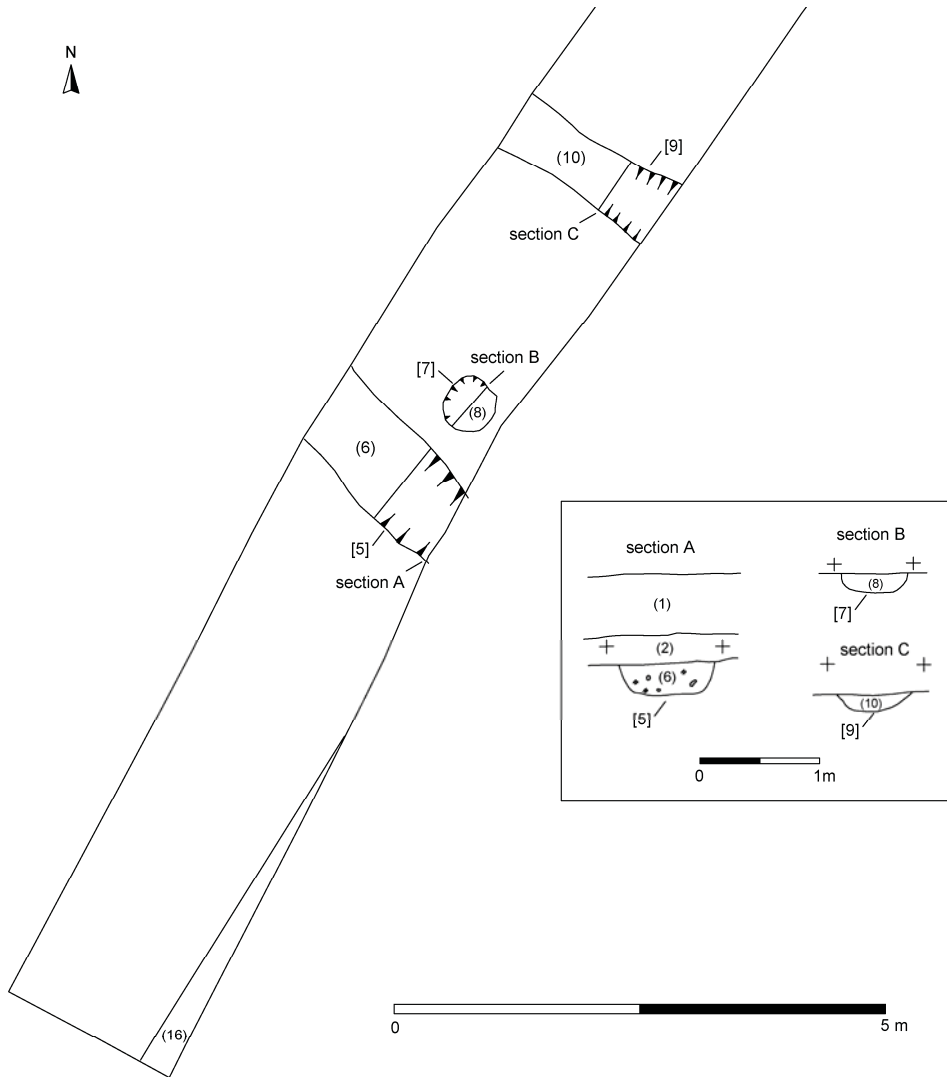


Figure 8: Trench 2 plan and sections



Figure 9: Trench 2, ditch [5] in foreground, with circular feature [7], and gully [9] beyond. Looking north, scale 1m.

Trench 3

No archaeological finds or deposits were located within this trench. The topsoil (1) consisted of a dark grey-brown sandy-clay approximately *c.*0.3m thick above a deposit of yellow-brown sandy-clay, approximately 0.2m thick. The natural substratum was reached *c.*0.55m below current ground level (140.89m O.D.). This consisted of a yellow-orange sandy clay mixed with frequent pebbles.

Trench 4

The topsoil (1) in this trench comprised dark grey-brown clayey-silt with occasional angular pebbles approximately *c.*0.3m thick. It lay above yellow-brown silty-clay, with occasional angular pebbles approximately 0.2m thick. In the northern half of the trench was a 1.2m wide linear ditch feature [3] orientated north-east to south-west, which was revealed for a length of 10m (Figure 10 and 11). This had concave sides and a flat base, and was filled with a mid-brown-grey silty-clay (4) which contained a small number of fire-cracked pebbles and a single sherd of pottery dated to AD 850-1066. The ditch was 0.5m below modern ground level.

The natural substratum consisted of a yellow-brown sands and gravels, and was reached *c.*0.5m below current ground level, 140.43m to 141.24m O.D.

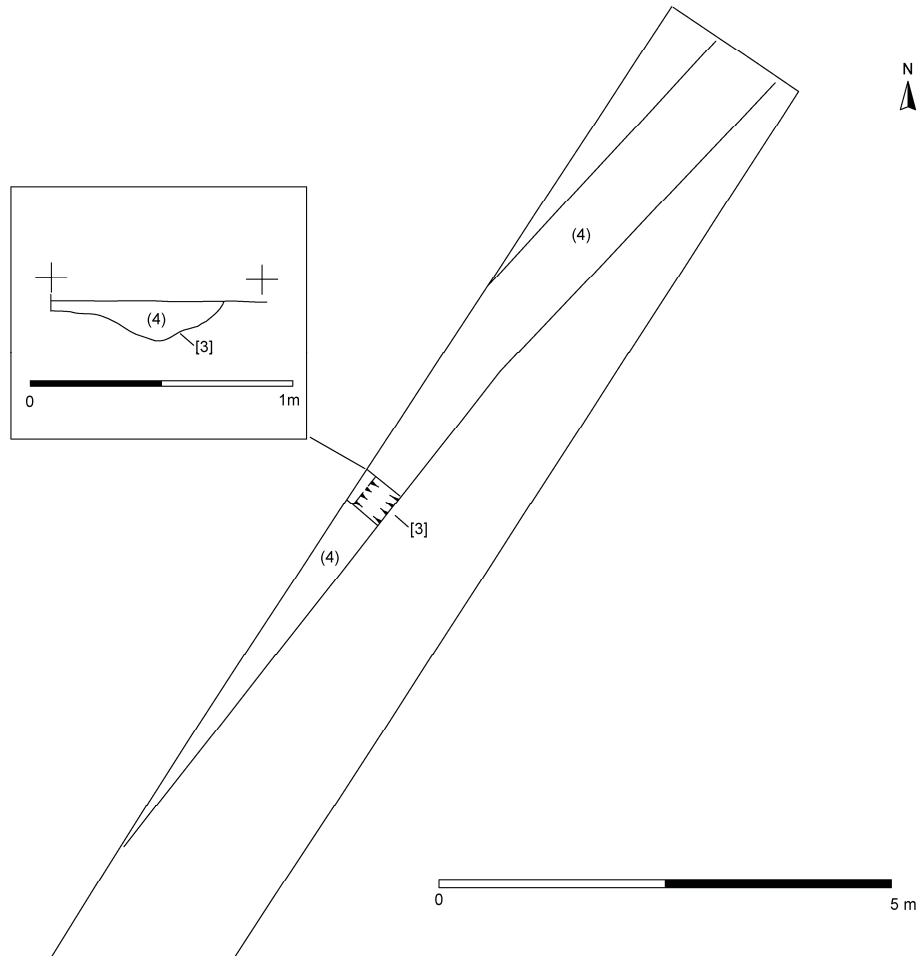


Figure 10: Trench 4 plan and section



Figure 11: Ditch [3] within Trench 4. Looking north, scale 1m x 0.3m.

7. Discussion

The site is unusual in that it is an undeveloped plot of land within the core of a medieval village and such opportunities to investigate evidence that may show the origins and development of a medieval village are relatively rare. Archaeological investigation of medieval settlements that are still in occupation is regarded as a high research priority in the East Midlands (Lewis 2006, 212).

The evaluation revealed archaeological evidence for the early development of the village - dating to the late Saxon and medieval periods (AD 850-1500) in three trenches (1, 2, and 4). The limited evaluation prevents full interpretation, though the following explanation of the evidence is proposed.

The earliest evidence identified on the site consisted of a possible post-hole in Trench 2 and a ditch in Trench 4, both of which contained a single sherd of late Saxon pottery dated to *c.*850-1066. Two further linear features in Trench 2 contained no finds, but could conceivably be contemporary. These features could be evidence for property divisions or buildings.

Later evidence of possible medieval date was discovered in Trench 1. The very well-made cobble surface was located close to the street frontage, and was built after *c.*1250-1300, based on the presence of a single sherd of pottery found beneath it. Unfortunately there were no diagnostic features within the surface itself to aid closer dating and cobbling of this type could be from the medieval or post-medieval period. Anecdotal evidence from the client via the agent suggests that the surface was in use up to around 50 years ago when sheep were herded into the yard; later it was buried beneath dumps of spoil. The trial trenching did not provide confirmation of this suggested date for the disuse of the surface, the only evidence consisting of pottery directly overlying it dated to *c.*1400-1550. This material, however, could quite possibly be residual. The orientation of the drain within the surface, at right-angles to Main Street, indicates a cobbled road or track leading from the street presumably to a building further west. Alternatively, the cobbling could indicate a paved yard, perhaps serving buildings on either side, or set further back from the street frontage. If medieval in date, the cobbling perhaps relates to a 'toft and croft' (medieval buildings and adjoining gardens), examples of which have been excavated at numerous villages in the region, notably at Anstey (Browning and Higgins 2003). Another interpretation of the cobble surface is that it could be the remains of a house platform, similar examples have been excavated within the county, notably at Lutterworth (Priest and Chapman 2002), and Eye Kettleby (N. Finn pers. comm.).

8. Conclusion

The presence of small quantities of late Saxon and medieval pottery in the evaluation trenches points to settlement activity of these periods in the vicinity and it is possible that the linear features and post hole relate to this. A well-made cobbled surface constructed after *c.*1250-1300, could also be of medieval or post-medieval date and relate to a toft and croft on Main Street. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that the surface was still in use comparatively recently. The site hence has some potential to contribute to our knowledge of the early development of the village of Ashby Parva, and the wider contextual understanding of the development and decline of Shrunken Medieval Villages in the region.

9. Archive

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services Section, accession no. XA.167.2010.

The archive contains:

- 4 trench recording sheets
- 1 photographic recording sheet
- Scaled drawings showing plans and sections of archaeological features with context descriptions
- CD containing digital photographs
- 33mm black and white contact sheet and negatives
- Survey plans
- Unbound copy & CD of this report

The report will be listed on the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. Available at: <http://oasis.ac.uk/>

ID	OASIS entry summary
Project Name	The Hollies, Ashby Parva, Leicestershire
Summary	<p>University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land to the rear of The Hollies, Main Street, Ashby Parva, Leicestershire (SP 5266 8885). The work was undertaken as part of an archaeological impact assessment in advance of a proposed development.</p> <p>The evaluation revealed archaeological evidence for the early development of the village - dating from the late Saxon to late medieval periods (AD 850 - 1500) A well-made cobble surface of medieval date was located in Trench 1 close to the street frontage, this may be a cobble road or yard surface leading off from the street. This may have served buildings on either side, or set further back from the street front. Alternatively the cobble surface could be the remains of a house platform. Ditches, gullies, and a post-hole in Trenches 2 and 4 (set further back from Main Street) date to the late Saxon period and could be evidence for property divisions or buildings. No archaeological remains were detected within Trench 3.</p> <p>The quality of the archaeological evidence revealed in the evaluation, indicates that the site has good potential to add a significant new understanding to the early development of the village of Ashby Parva, and the wider understanding of the development of medieval rural settlement in the region.</p>
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	Vicki Score
Project Supervisor	Gavin Speed
Previous/Future work	Previous: none. / Future: uncertain
Current Land Use	Meadow
Development Type	Commercial
Reason for Investigation	PPS15
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-application
Site Co ordinates	SP 526 885
Start/end dates of	07/09/2010 – 08/09/2010

field work	
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services
Study Area	0.37ha
Associated project reference codes	Museum accession ID: XA.167.2010. OASIS form ID: universi1-83556

10. Publication

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's (ADS) Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York.

11. Bibliography

- Browning, J. and Higgins, T. 2003, "Excavations of a Medieval Toft and Croft at Cropston Road, Anstey, Leicestershire". *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 77, 65-81.
- Hunt, L. 2010 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for Land To The Rear of The Hollies, Main Street, Ashby Parva, Leicestershire*. University of Leicester Archaeological Services unpublished report 2010-148.
- IfA, 2008 *Code of Conduct*.
- IfA, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*
- MAP 2 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (2nd edition). English Heritage.
- MGC 1992 *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections 1992* (Museums and Galleries Commission)
- Mills A.D. 2003 *A Dictionary of British Place-Names (Oxford Paperback Reference)*.
- Lewis, C. 2006, "The Medieval Period". In: N. Cooper (ed.) *The Archaeology Of The East Midlands. An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda*. Leicester Archaeology Monograph 13, 185-216.
- Pearce, T. and Mellor, J.E. 1986, *Excavations at North Manor Farm, South Croxton, Leicestershire*. Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service Archaeological Report No. 11.
- Priest, V. and Chapman, S. 2002, *An Archaeological Excavation at The Site of St. John the Baptist's Hospital, Mill Farm, Lutterworth, Leicestershire*. University of Leicester Archaeological Services unpublished report 2002-135.
- 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.

12. Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was carried out by Gavin Speed, and Tim Higgins. Vicki Score managed the project.

Gavin Speed
Senior Archaeological Supervisor
University of Leicester Archaeological Services
University Road
Leicester
LE1 7RH

gs50@le.ac.uk

Tel: 0116 252 2848

Fax: 0116 252 2614

25/10/2010

Appendix I: Pottery Report

By Deborah Sawday

The pottery, thirteen sherds, weighing 65 grams, was catalogued with reference to the ULAS and related county fabric series (Sawday 1989), (Davies and Sawday 1999). A fragment of post medieval brick was also recovered. The results are shown below.

Of particular note were the two pottery sherds from the linear features [3] and [9]. These are of uncertain date, but are possibly Late Saxon. Another sherd dating from *circa* 1250 to the later 13th or possibly the early 14th century was found under the cobbles in context 12.

Table: The medieval and later potter and brick by context, fabric, number and weight (grams)

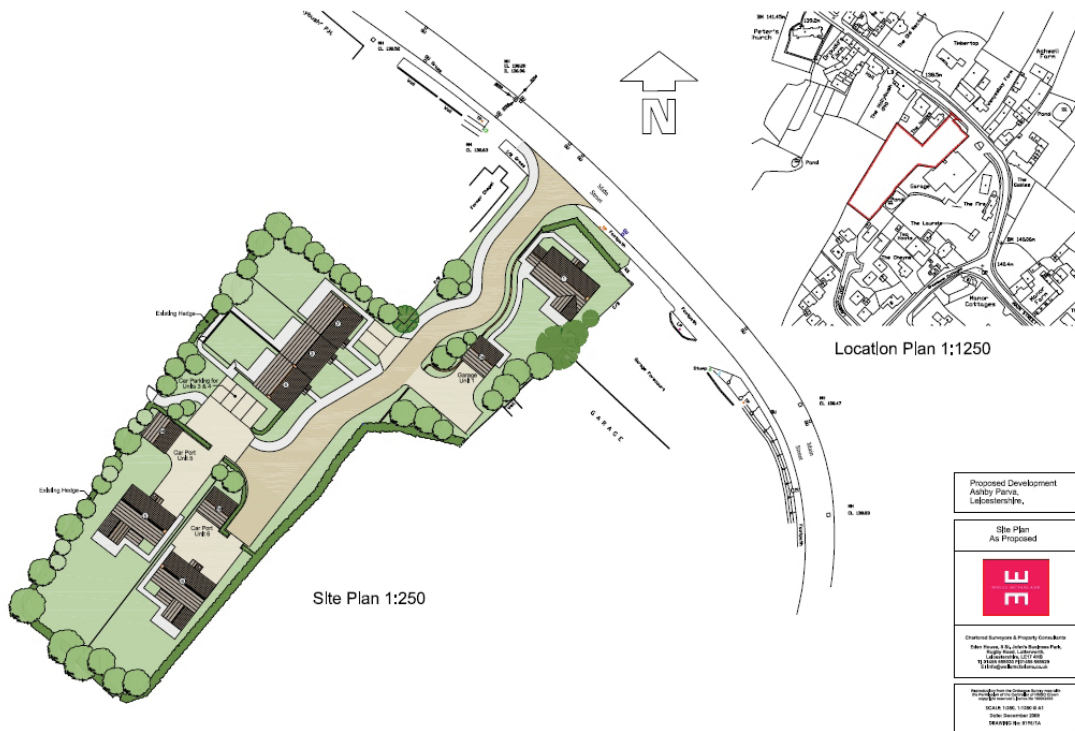
Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos	Grams	Comments
POT				
4 [3] linear feature	SN – Saint Neots/type	1	5	Handmade body sherd (Northants CTS 100/101 etc), Late Saxon/.
10 [9] linear feature	SN – Saint Neots/type	1	4	Fragment of rim, inclusions leached out, possibly late Saxon
12 spread below cobbles	CC1 – Chilvers Coton 1	1	5	Hard fired, some abrasion, – mid-later 13th, ?14th C
13 layer above cobbles	RS – Reduced Sandy	2	3	?hand made, early med?
13	PM – Potters Marston	3	21	2 jar/bowl rims – abraded, 12th – 13th C
13	CC5 - Chilvers Coton 5	2	11	Jar rim and body – Warwickshire CTS fabric STR20 (Ratkai and Soden 1998) - mid-later 13th
13	CC1 – Chilvers Coton 1	1	3	Hard fired – mid-later 13th, ?14th C
13	CW/MB – Cistercian/Midland Black	1	2	Late medieval – early post-medieval
15 above cobbles & silt	EA2 – Earthenware 2	1	11	Post medieval/modern
BRICK				
15	EA - Earthenware	1	353	Handmade, post medieval

Bibliography

- Connor, A., and Buckley, R., 1999 *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*, Leicester Archaeology Mon. **5**.
- Davies, S., and Sawday, D., 1999 'The Post Roman Pottery and Tile' in A. Connor and R. Buckley, 1999, 165-213.
- Northants County Type Series

- Ratkai, S., and Soden, I., 1998. *Warwickshire Medieval and Post-Medieval Ceramic Type Series*. Unpublished manuscript held by Warwickshire Museum Archaeological Field Services.
- Sawday, D., 1991 'Potters Marston Ware', *Trans. Leicestershire Archaeol. and Hist. Soc.* **65**, 34-37.

Appendix II: Plan of proposed development



Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay
University of Leicester Archaeological
Services (ULAS)
University of Leicester,
University Road,
Leicester LE1 7RH

T: +44 (0)116 252 2848

F: +44 (0)116 252 2614

E: ulas@le.ac.uk

w: www.le.ac.uk/ulas



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2008/9