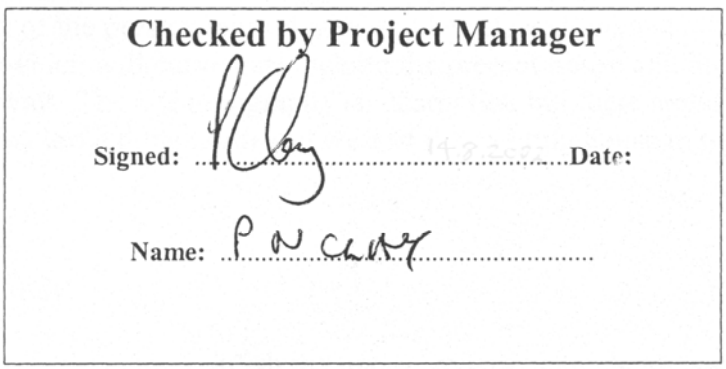
An archaeological evaluation on land near junction 19 of the M1 motorway, Leicestershire (SP 561 783)

Jon Coward

For White Green Young
and the Highways Agency



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1. Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken by ULAS for White Green Young and the Highways Agency in June 2005 on land near Junction 19 of the M1 motorway, Leicestershire (SP 561 783), in advance of junction alterations. The trenches were positioned to test the archaeological potential of Site 19 as defined in the desk based assessment: a putative faint cropmark, and also a Romano-British pottery scatter. Very little archaeological material was present, and no convincing archaeological deposits were revealed which corresponded to the cropmark. The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services under accession code X.A135. 2005.

2. Introduction

The trenching evaluation forms part of the archaeological work carried out in advance of alterations to Junction 19 of the M1, where the M1, the M6, and the A14 meet. The area is Site 19 as defined in the Stage 3 archaeological assessment (Priest 2004), and comprises of a possible enclosure cropmark and a surface scatter, predominantly of Romano-British pottery. The area may be impacted on by proposed junction changes and an adjacent haul road (Priest 2005)

3. Objectives

The objective of the trial trenching was to ascertain whether any significant archaeological remains were present in the area, and if so, to establish their extent, date, quality, character, form and potential.

4 General Methodology

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

Trial trenching totalling *c.*280m^2 was undertaken. Trench 6 was positioned over the putative cropmark, whilst trenches 1 - 5 provided a sample of the area. The work was carried out in June 2005.

The topsoil was removed in spits by machine using a toothless ditching bucket under full archaeological supervision, until archaeological deposits or undisturbed substrata were encountered. The location of the trenches was surveyed using a Total Station Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) linked to a Psion hand held computer. All trenches were recorded on *pro-forma* trench recording sheets and photographed. Any potential archaeological deposits were photographed and drawn to scale.

5. Geology and topography

The evaluation area slopes down to the south, with a minor slope to the east. It lies to the west of the M1. Although indicated as river terrace gravels on the geological map, natural substrata as exposed in the evaluation trenches were predominantly boulder clays, with some areas of pebbly gravel within a clay matrix.

6. Results

No subsoil was encountered in any of the trenches, and topsoil was very thin (25cms or less) in most places. In all the trenches, banding in the boulder clay and/or clayish gravels was visible representing medieval plough furrows running on a north-west to south-east orientation. Land drains had been installed on the same orientation. There was no evidence for colluvial build up at the base of the slope to the south.

Trench 1

Topsoil was a mid grey brown sandy clay, over yellowish grey boulder clay. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Interval from south end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	25	20	25	20	28	22	23
Top of natural	25	20	25	20	28	22	23
Base of trench	35	30	35	25	40	30	30

Trench 2

Topsoil was a light grey brown sandy clay. Natural substrata were yellow sandy clay with manganese. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Interval from south end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	15	28	22	20	25	20	18
Top of natural	15	28	22	20	25	20	18
Base of trench	18	35	28	30	30	23	23

Trench 3

Topsoil was a light grey brown sandy clay. Natural substrata were yellow boulder clay with areas of gravel in clay. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Interval from south end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	26	25	22	30	20	28	30
Top of natural	26	25	22	30	20	28	30
Base of trench	32	30	26	35	25	38	35

Trench 4

Topsoil was a light grey brown sandy clay. Natural substrata were greyish yellow sandy clay with manganese, with areas of gravel in clay. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Interval from south end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	26	20	25	30	30	25	25
Top of natural	26	20	25	30	30	25	25
Base of trench	35	30	30	35	38	30	32

Trench 5

Topsoil was a light grey brown sandy clay. Natural substratum was a greyish yellow clay with patches of pebbly gravels. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Interval from south end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	20	23	22	33	28	25	25
Top of natural	20	23	22	33	28	25	25
Base of trench	30	28	26	40	32	33	30

Trench 6

Topsoil was a light grey brown sandy clay. Natural substratum was a greyish yellow boulder clay with manganese, with occasional gravel and pebble patches. One of the plough furrows appeared to be slightly siltier than the norm, and as it was in approximately the right position and orientation to be the cropmark, a box section was put through it. Unfortunately no convincing archaeological feature could be discerned apart from the plough furrow itself, although some modern brick fragments (not retained) and a small piece of flint debitage were recovered.

Interval from south end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	18	25	25	35	20	35	30
Top of natural	18	25	25	35	20	35	30
Base of trench	23	35	30	43	25	40	35

7. Discussion

The evaluation produced no evidence for any archaeological features associated with the Romano-British fieldwalking scatter. In fact no pottery of any antiquity was seen. No convincing features representing the cropmark were revealed. Whilst it is possible that the excavated medieval furrow in trench 6 could have masked the line of a previously-existing linear feature, there should have been a perpendicular return in the same trench: no such feature was apparent. Either the cropmark is not exactly where it has been plotted, or it does not represent an archaeological feature, or it has been ploughed out over the course of recent years. Alternatively, as the original aerial photograph has not been available for examination, it is possible that the location of the cropmark included in

the Sites and Monuments Record is not accurate, and the cropmark may be located further south or west.

8. Archive

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services under accession code X.A134.2005. It consists of 1 find, 1 context sheet, 6 trench recording sheets, 1 scaled drawing, and 7 digital images of the nature of the work undertaken.

9. Acknowledgements

The work was directed by Jon Coward with the assistance of Luis Huscroft. The project was managed by Patrick Clay. Cliff Kirby of Skanska monitored the project on behalf of White Young Green. We would like to thank Mr Grindal for his co-operation in enabling access for this work.

10. Bibliography

Priest, V., 2005 *M1 Junction 19, Leicestershire/Northamptonshire. Stage 3 Archaeological Desk-based Assessment Walkover Survey and Evaluation* ULAS report 2005-059

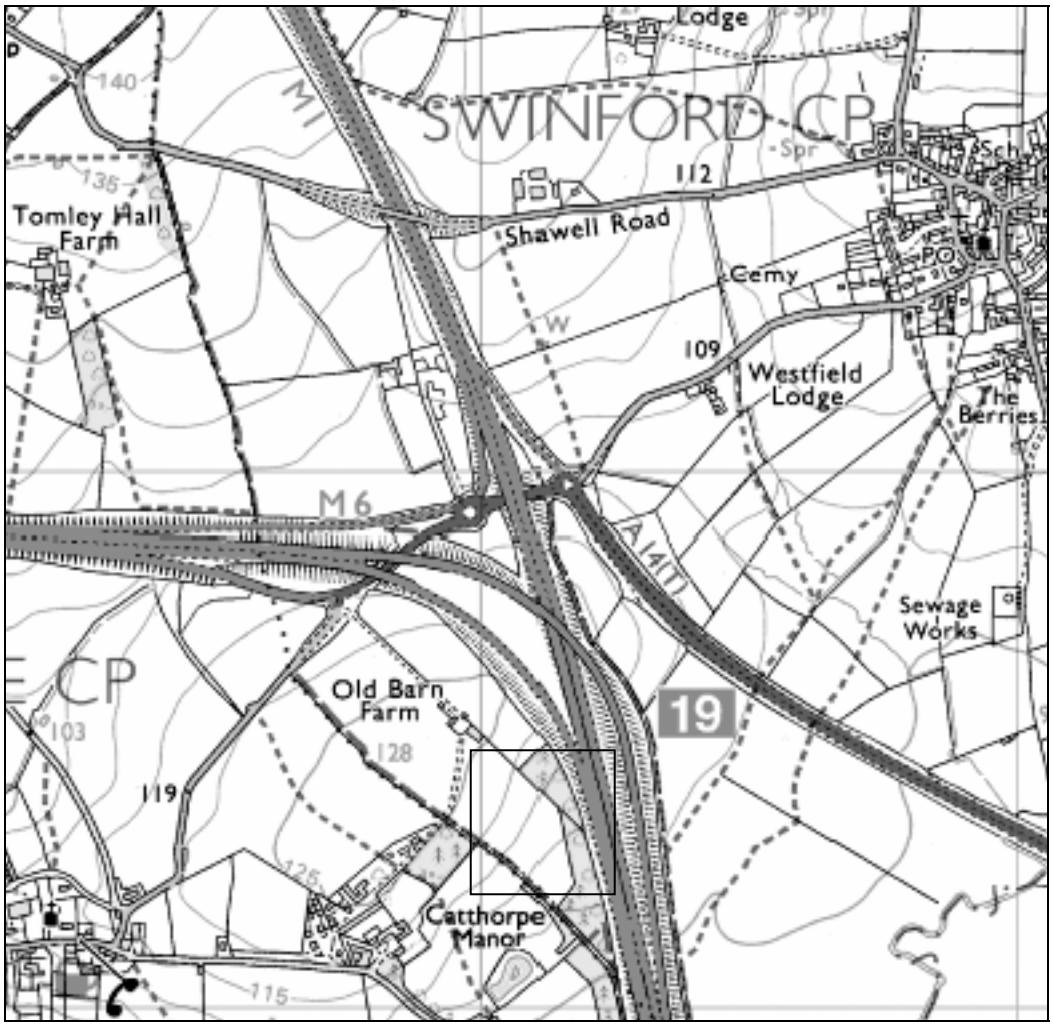

Fig 1. Location of Site.

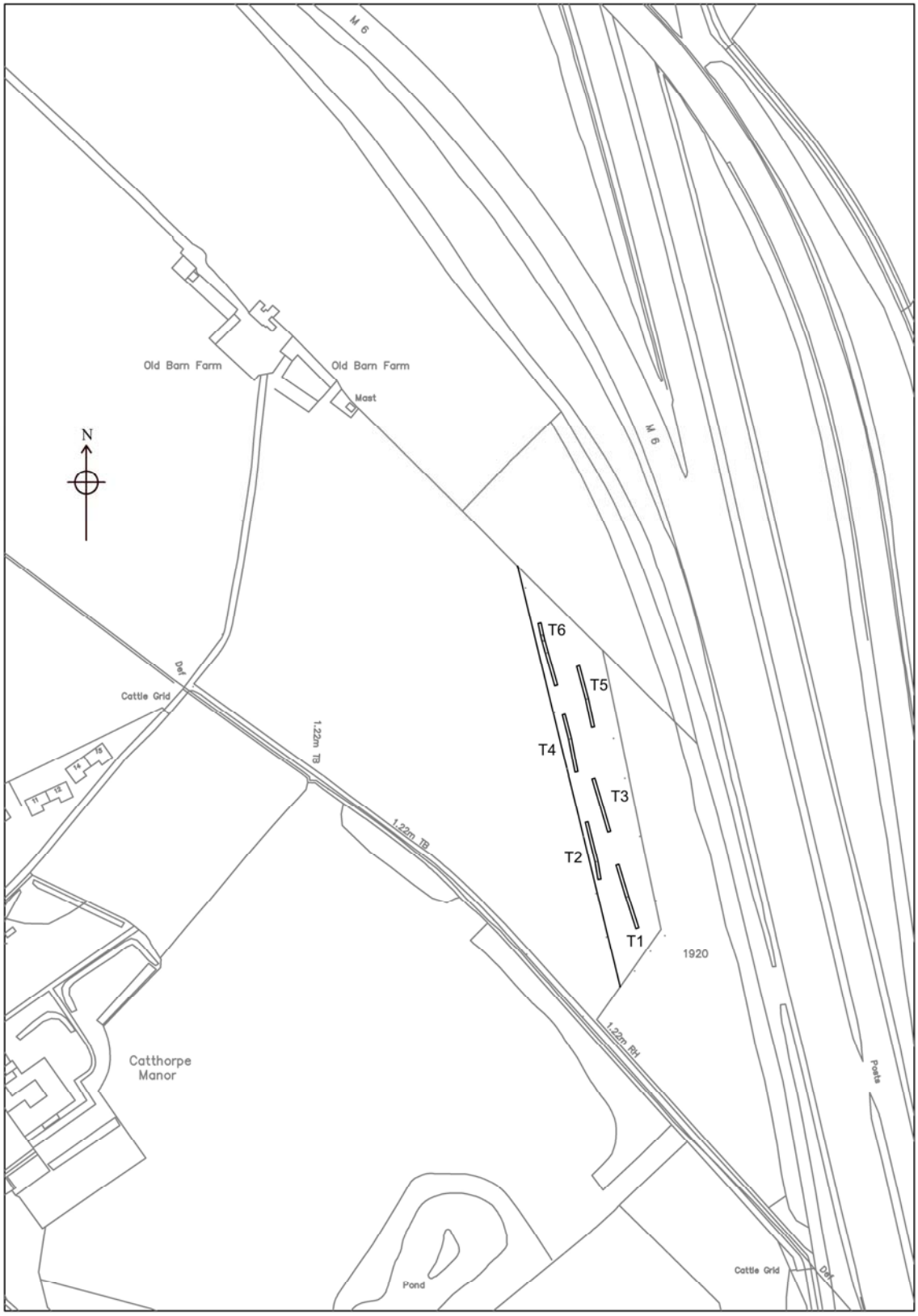

Fig 2 Layout of trenches within area of interest
Scale 1:2500. Based on developer plans

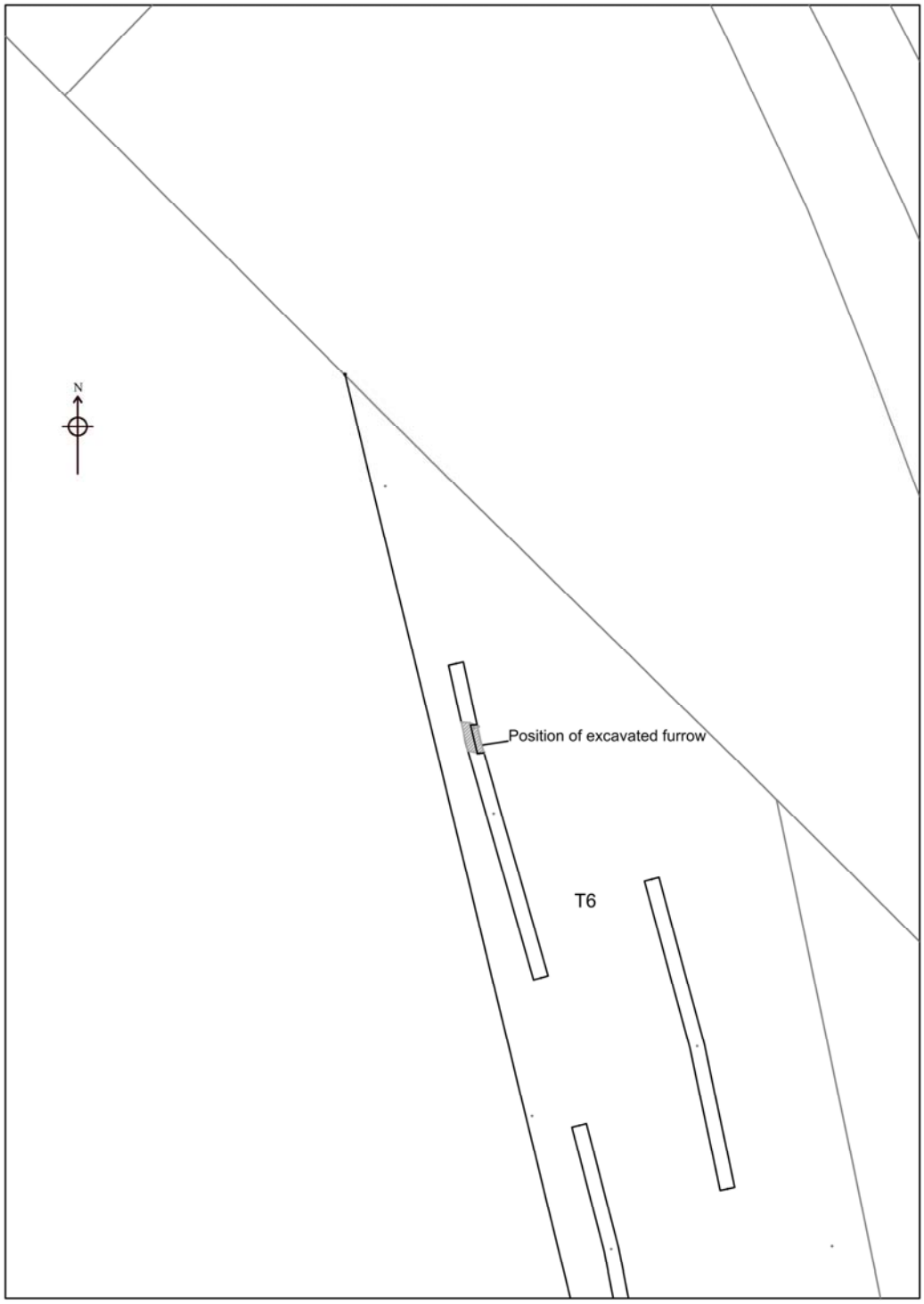

Fig 3 Position of excavated furrow within trench 6
Scale 1:500 Based on developer plans

Fig 4 Box section dug through potential linear feature in trench 6

Fig 5 Trench 2, and the general nature of the work. Looking north