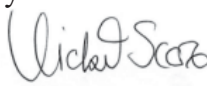
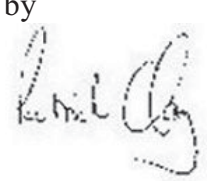


**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Shawell Quarry Extension
Shawell, Leicestershire**

NGR: SP 5315/8100

J.Harvey

For: Archaeologica Ltd. on behalf of Lafarge Aggregates Ltd.

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An Archaeological Evaluation at Shawell Quarry Extension, Shawell, Leicestershire (SP 5315 8100)

James Harvey

Summary

An archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken at the proposed Shawell Quarry Extension, Shawell, Leicestershire by University of Leicester Archaeological Services in advance of this extension. Eight trenches were excavated in an area defined as having archaeological potential based of geophysical survey. Two sets of ridge and furrow were indentified within the evaluation area, however no significant archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered.

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museums Services under the accession number X.A122.2008.

1. Introduction

Planning permission has been granted by Harborough District Council for an extension to the existing quarry at Shawell, Leicestershire (P/A 2006/1565/03). As a condition of the permission a programme of archaeological investigation has been formulated by the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council as advisor to the planning authority. As a part of this programme an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was required within *Fields 4* and *6* of the proposed development, in an area where a higher archaeological potential had been highlighted through detailed magnetometry survey. University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Archaeologica Ltd. on behalf of LaFarge Aggregates Ltd. to carry out this evaluation.

The proposed development has been subject to an archaeological desk-based assessment (Thorpe 2003) that concluded that is no evidence from the literary and cartographic sources suggested the presence of archaeologically important material within the application area. It is suggested that the Roman town of *Tripontium* did not extend into the development area although there was a suggestion that Saxon burials at Gibbet Hall could extend that far. Detailed magnetometry and magnetic susceptibility was also undertaken on the site that identified a few pit like anomalies within the development area, but the lack of additional features could suggest these 'pits' may only represented changes in the natural geology.

2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

The development area is located 3.5km south of Lutterworth, 6.5km north of Rugby on land to the west of South Lodge (figs. 1 and 2). The proposed development area covers some 38.7ha although the evaluation area only covers *Fields 4* and *6* that covers *c.*10ha. The current land use consisted of arable farmland that undulates from

132m OD at the southern end of *Field 6*, falling to 129.5m OD towards South Lodge, and then rising again to 130.5m OD at the northern end of the evaluation area.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain 170 (Market Harborough) indicated the geology was likely to consist of brown Jurassic rock fragments with lenses of sand and gravel, clay and silty clay with chalk and flint fragments.

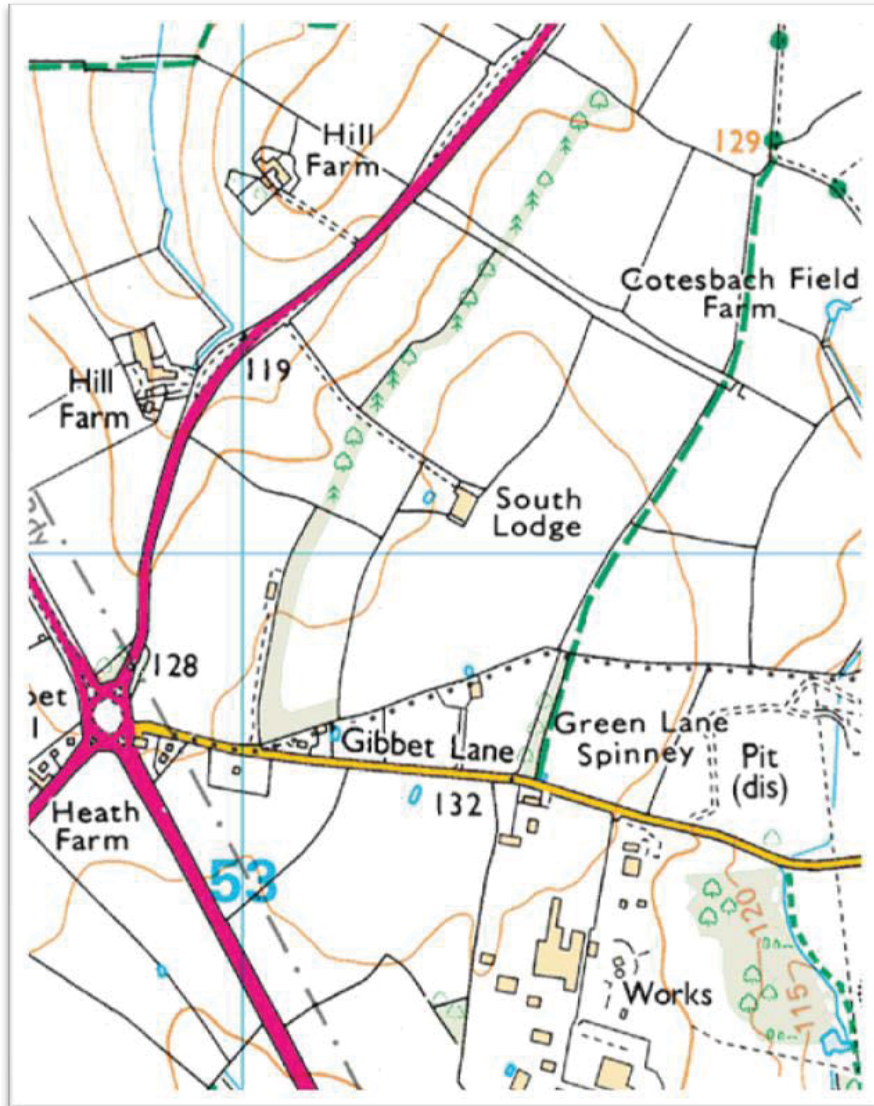


Figure 1 Site Location Plan (Scale 1:25000)

Reproduced from the OS map Land ranger on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesties Stationary Office. © Crown Copyright All rights reserved Licence Number AL 100029495

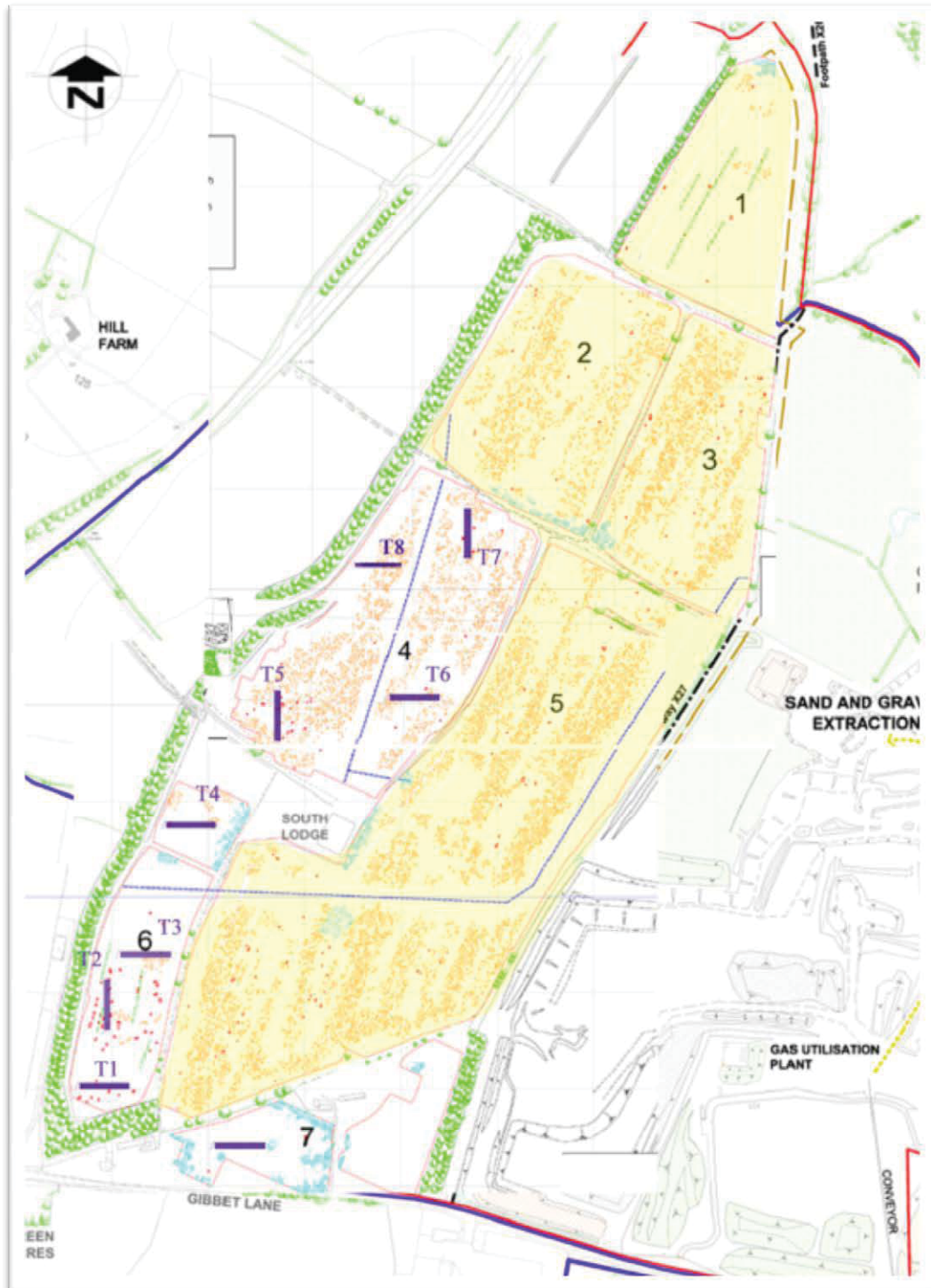


Figure 2 Site Location Plan including proposed trench layout (provided by client)

3. Historical and Archaeological Background (taken from Lisboa, 2007)

A desk-based assessment was conducted around the area of the proposed quarry extension that concluded:

'There is little or no evidence from the examination of the literary and cartographic sources for the presence of archaeologically important material within the application site. Gibbet Hill, in Warwickshire, outside the application area, was obliterated in the 18th century and it is unlikely that material from this levelling would have been deposited within the application area. Though a Saxon sword is attributed as having been found during the levelling of Gibbet Hill and re-deposited in a wood nearby (Knowles 1875) there is no unequivocal provenance for its discovery. There is no evidence from this study of prehistoric or Roman occupation or structures within the application area though these may have been removed by medieval cultivation to the east and north.

There is no evidence to suggest that there are archaeological features or structures of Anglo-Saxon date within the study area. Though there were, reputedly, secondary Saxon burials in Gibbet Hill it is unlikely, though not inconceivable, that these extend into the application area.

There is some evidence of relict, possibly medieval field boundaries and relict cultivation terraces to the south of the study area, adjacent to Gibbet Hill Lane and it is likely that the land within the application area formed open fields between parishes.' (Thorpe 2003)

The Roman town of Tripontium is located to the south of the development area and the site has been quite extensively excavated (Cameron and Lucas 1969; 1973). Excavations revealed a late Roman ditched enclosure straddling Watling Street, and inserted into an existing town. This fortified enclosure is comparable to burgis found at, for example, Wall and Mancetter. It may be that the Tripontium (Cave's Hill), Mancetter and Wall examples, together with Red Hill and Penkridge, formed a sequence of intermediate stations along Watling Street from Wroxeter to Towcester, comparable to the systems found widely across the Roman Empire (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 35, 275).

Cameron and Lucas (1969, 131) argued that the northern extent of Tripontium had been established; however, examination of the excavation plans suggests that buildings and enclosures, mainly of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, were continuing northwards of the edge of their study area. It should be noted that the northernmost features were planned but not excavated. It therefore seemed likely that Tripontium continued north, even if only in a discontinuous manner which gradually merged into the countryside. There was a slight possibility that a 'suburban' sprawl of mixed residential and industrial or agricultural settlement may be present, but given the distance from the northern edge of Tripontium as argued by Cameron and Lucas the Roman town would not extend as far north as the proposed development area.

A total detailed magnetometry and magnetic susceptibility has been undertaken for the proposed quarry area. This work identified a few pit-like anomalies in fields 4 and 6 that had archaeological potential, however the lack of additional features, such as ditches and enclosures, coupled with the concentrations of apparent natural magnetic activity at the site would suggest these 'pits' were likely to be natural in origin.

4. Aims and Objectives

The main aims of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed quarry extension.
- 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 quarry extension.

5. Methodology

The *Specification* stated that eight trenches, 50m x 2m were to be located within Fields 4 and 6 in order to target the geophysical anomalies highlighted by the magnetometry survey. However the trenches were excavated using a JCB 3CX machine equipped with a 1.5m toothless ditching bucket as opposed to the 2m width because the larger machine could not reach the site due to the adverse weather conditions.

The topsoil and overlying layers were removed under full archaeological supervision until either the top of archaeology or natural undisturbed ground was reached, or to a depth of 1.2m.

The bases of the trenches were cleaned in areas where potential archaeology was observed. If archaeological remains were identified, there were to be planned to scale and recorded. Limited excavation would also be undertaken in order to determine the character and date of any remains.

The trenches were located using a Topcon Hiper Pro GPS+ RTK System attached to a Topcon FC-100 controller. The data was processed using Topcon Tools GPS+ Post Processing Software and the final plans completed with the aid of TurboCad v.11 design software.

All the work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*, and the *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service).

6. Results

A total of eight trenches was excavated within the proposed development area (fig.3). These varied slightly in position from the proposed trench plan due to the accuracy of the GPS receiver. Trench 1 was extended to track a possible feature and Trench 8 was shortened slightly in order to avoid an underground service. As noted above the

trenches were 1.5m in width rather than the 2m width proposed in the specification. A total of 403 linear metres of trenching was undertaken (equalling 604.5m²).

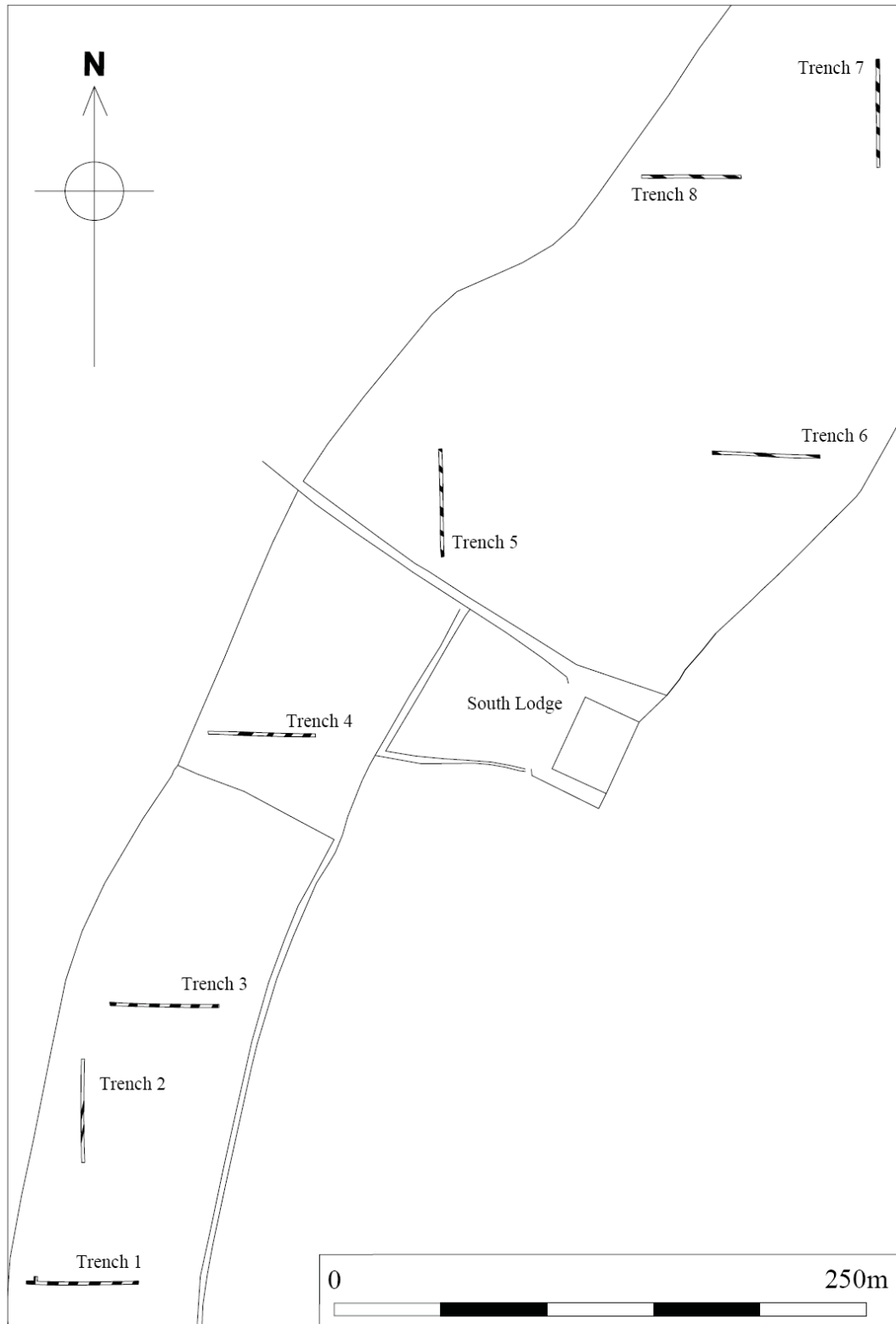


Figure 3 Trench Location Plan showing location of medieval furrows

Trenches 1-3 (Field 6)

Field 6 had been recently harvested prior to the evaluation with stubble remaining. Machining of trenches in the field removed a layer of greyish brown clayey silt topsoil to a depth of approximately 200-370mm. Natural orangey brown clay substratum was located directly beneath the topsoil that contained occasional patches of brown gravel.

Trench 1 (fig.4)

Length: 52.8m

Width: 1.5-3.72m

Depth: 0.24m (min) 0.48m (max), 130.94-131.32m OD

Orientation: E-W

The trench contained six parallel linear features that cut the natural substratum. These were approximately the same width, *c.*4m wide and equally distant, *c.* 5m from one another and were aligned north-north-east to south-south-west. These features represent the filled in furrows of medieval or early post medieval ridge and furrow strip cultivation. Ceramic field drains had been excavated into the centres of these features. The easternmost furrow was excavated to a depth of 220mm below the topsoil. No other archaeological finds or features were located in this trench.



Figure 4 Trench 1 looking east

Trench 2

Length: 48.7m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.22m (min) 0.40m (max), 130.64-130.97m OD

Orientation: N-S

Two furrows were observed cutting the natural substratum. These were approximately the same width, *c.* 1.3m wide and equally distant, *c.* 5m from one another and were aligned north-north-east to south-south-west. The trench base also contained considerable plough scarring. No other archaeological finds or features were located in this trench.

Trench 3

Length: 51.3m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.27m (min) 0.52m (max), 130.72-131.06m OD

Orientation: E-W

Six furrows were observed cutting the natural substratum. These were approximately the same width, *c.* 4m wide and equally distant, *c.* 5m from one another and were aligned north-north-east to south-south-west. No other archaeological finds or features were located in this trench.

Trench 4 (fig.5)

Length: 50.4m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.24m (min) 0.45m (max), 129.26-130.13m OD

Orientation: E-W

Trench 4 was located in a small un-cultivated field to the west of south lodge, which had been left as set-aside. Machining of the trench in this field removed a layer of greyish brown clayey silt topsoil to a depth of approximately 220-340mm. Natural orangey brown clay was located directly beneath the topsoil that contained occasional patches of brown gravel. The trench was badly flooded when it was recorded. Four furrows could be clearly seen and these were approximately the same width, *c.* 4m wide and equally distant, *c.* 5m from one another and were aligned north-north-east to south-south-west. There were a further two furrows at the western end of the trench which was completely under water so could not be accurately located. No other archaeological finds or features were located in this trench.



Figure 5 Trench 4 looking west

Trenches 5-8 (Field 4)

Field 4 had been recently harvested prior to the evaluation with stubble remaining. Machining of trenches in the field removed a layer of greyish brown clayey silt topsoil to a depth of approximately 200-400mm. Natural orangey brown clay was located directly beneath the topsoil that contained occasional patches of brown gravel.

Trench 5

Length: 50.8m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.25m (min) 0.68m (max), 129.04-130.79m OD

Orientation: N-S

Six furrows were observed cutting the natural substratum. These were approximately the same width, *c.*3m wide and equally distant, *c.* 6m from one another and were aligned east-south-east to west-north-west. No other archaeological finds or features were located in this trench.

Trench 6 (fig.6)

Length: 50.6m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.29m (min) 0.55m (max), 131.72-131.89m OD

Orientation: E-W

Three furrows were observed cutting the natural substratum. These were approximately the same width, *c.*3m wide and equally distant, *c.* 6m from one another and were aligned east southeast–west northwest. No other archaeological finds or features were located in this trench.



Figure 6 Trench 6 looking west

Trench 7

Length: 50.8m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.25m (min) 0.44m (max), 129.73-130.55m OD

Orientation: N-S

Five furrows were observed cutting the natural substratum. These were approximately the same width, *c.* 3m wide and equally distant, *c.* 5m from one another and were aligned east-south-east to west-north-west. No other archaeological finds or features were located in this trench.

Trench 8

Length: 46.8m

Width: 1.5m

Depth: 0.29m (min) 0.40m (max), 130.08-130.55m OD

Orientation: E-W

Three furrows were observed cutting the natural substratum. These were approximately the same width, c.3m wide and equally distant, c. 6m from one another and were aligned east-south-east to west-north-west. No other archaeological finds or features were located in this trench.

7. Discussion

The trial trenching at the proposed Shawell Quarry Extension revealed no archaeological deposits within the evaluated area. Two separate layouts of ridge and furrow were identified within the evaluation (fig.3), both of which have been observed in aerial photographs. These run perpendicular to each other and are bisected by the trackway leading to South Lodge that runs parallel to northern ridge and furrow. This could suggest the trackway and indeed the location of South Lodge may have some antiquity. The First Edition OS map of 1890 clearly shows a farm complex on the site of the existing barn with the trackway leading to a farmhouse at the northwest corner of the complex.

Field drains had been excavated into bases of the furrows sometime after the strip ploughing had gone out of use. This suggests that there is very poor drainage across the site. Trench 4 exhibited the worst flooding and may be the reason this land has been left as set-aside. If conditions have always been this difficult it may be indicative of the lack of settlement evidence across the site.

8. Archive

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museums Services under the accession number X.A122.2008. The content of the archive consists of:

- 1 Unbound A4 copy of this report
- 8 A4 Trench recording sheets
- 1 A4 Photo record sheet
- 1 Black and white contact print
- 16 Black and white picture negatives
- 1 A4 Colour digital contact print
- 1 CD of 24 digital photos

A summary of the work will be published in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course.

9. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by the author, assisted by Stephen Baker. Dr. Patrick Clay and Vicki Score managed the project, all of ULAS. I would like to thank the Quarry Manager, Adrian Bunyard for organising the machinery for the evaluation.

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