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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation
By Trial Trenching At
Longslade Community College,
Birstall, Leicester
NGR: SK 597 103**

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**An Archaeological Evaluation By Trial Trenching
At Longslade Community College,
Birstall, Leicestershire**

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Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching at Longslade Community College, Wanlip Lane, Birstall, Leicestershire (NGR SK 597 103)

Summary

Four trial trenches were excavated in the grounds of Longslade Community College, Wanlip Lane, Birstall, Leicestershire (NGR SK 597 103), in order to establish the presence or absence, nature and extent of any archaeological features in the proposed development area. The site lies in an area of archaeological interest, with particular evidence for Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon archaeology in the vicinity. An Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery was found during the building of the school in the late 1950s. However, no archaeological features or finds were identified during the current investigation. The archive will be held under the Accession Number: X.A141 2010.

Introduction

Trial trenching was carried out in the grounds of Longslade Community College, Wanlip, Leicestershire (NGR SK 597 103) on the 18th August 2010. The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5): Planning for the Historic Environment (Dept. for Communities and Local Government 2010). The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application area lies in a site of archaeological interest, close to known activity ranging from the prehistoric to post-medieval periods and summarised in a desk-based assessment (Speed 2010).

Leicestershire County Council Historic and Natural Environment team (LCCHNET), as former advisors to the planning authority, requested an evaluation by trial trenching to identify and locate any archaeological remains of significance and propose suitable treatment to avoid or minimise damage by the development. However, the planning authority did not insist on this work and planning permission was granted with a condition for an archaeological watching brief to be maintained to ensure adequate recording of any buried remains encountered during groundworks (P/08/0981/2). Following discussion with the client's contractors and, with the permission of the planning authority, it was agreed to carry out a programme of trial trenching prior to the commencement of groundworks. This was undertaken on the basis that if no evidence for buried archaeological remains was identified, there would be no subsequent need for an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during the groundworks. However, if positive results were obtained, an appropriate scheme of investigation would be agreed with the planning authority.

The work followed the 'Design Specification for Archaeological Work' produced by ULAS (Buckley 2010).

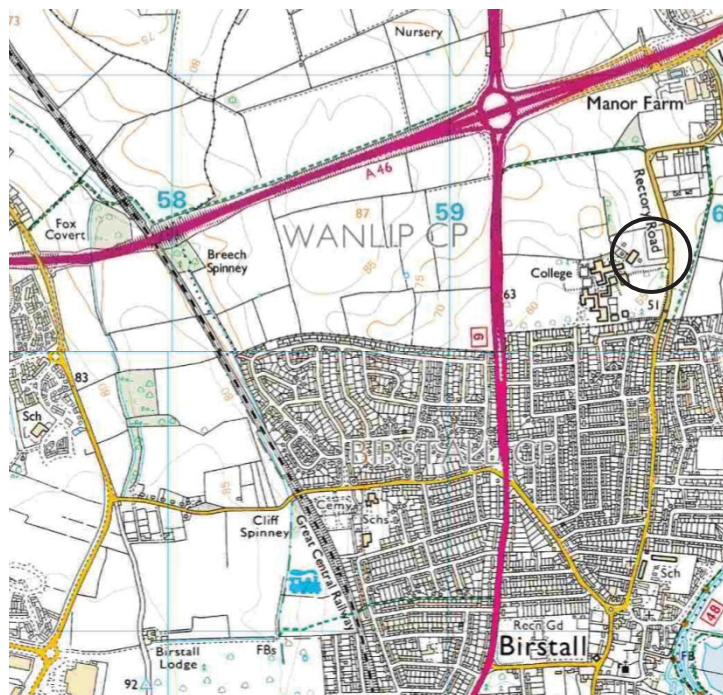


Figure 1: Location plan. Based on the 1:50 000 Landranger series. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100029495

Site description, Topography and Geology

The site lies on the northern edge of the village of Birstall and is located 600m south-east of the village of Wanlip. It is also within Wanlip parish and within Charnwood Borough. The site is currently used as a car park and all-weather pitch within Longslade Community College. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 155 indicates that the geology of the site is likely to consist of Mudstone and sand and gravels. The site lies at a height of around 53m above O.D.

The investigation site occupies two levels. The lower lying land at the southern end is currently a gravelled car park. The all-weather pitch occupied a flat plane above a steep grassy slope, which was thought to have been built up. Beyond the development area the land slopes upwards to the west and there are further changes in topography to the north.

Historical and Archaeological Background

Prior to the trial trenching an archaeological desk-based assessment was produced by ULAS (Speed 2010) and its conclusions are summarised below. This document examined the potential impact of the development by assembling data from available sources, including the HER (Historic Environment Record), Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, ULAS Reference Library and University of Leicester Library, paying particular attention to previous maps of the site.

Wanlip is referred to in the Domesday Book of 1086, where it is recorded as Anelop. The HER (Historic Environment Record) lists 61 known archaeological remains and

historic buildings within a 1km radius of the site, of which 31 refer to sites or finds of prehistoric date. Iron Age activity is particularly prominent and settlement sites have been identified north (MLE 1089, 9124), west (MLE 17179, 17180), north-west (MLE 9531) and east (MLE 6611) of the development area. Roman activity is known in the vicinity with the closest settlement located near Wanlip church (MLE1107). The development site lies within an area containing important Anglo-Saxon archaeology, most particularly an inhumation cemetery, which was excavated prior to the construction of Longslade School in 1958-60 and found to contain pottery, brooches, swords, shield-bosses and spearheads (Liddle 1980, MLE 1098). Field-walking and metal-detecting in the field to the north has produced further Saxon finds. Several other Anglo-Saxon sites have been located in the area, including settlement activity north of the A46 (MLE 9123, 9532). Medieval activity in the area is concentrated on the village cores of Wanlip and Birstall and the proposed development was thought unlikely to impact upon medieval archaeology or activity dating to the post-medieval period.

Aims and Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of archaeological deposits
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed groundworks
- To report any results and produce an archive

Within these stated objectives, the principal aim of the trial trenching was 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

The topsoil and underlying layers were excavated under continuous archaeological supervision using a JCB 3CX with a 1.6m ditching bucket until either the top of archaeology or the natural substratum/undisturbed ground was reached or to a maximum depth of 1.2m.

The bases of the trenches were cleaned in areas where potential archaeological deposits were observed. Limited excavation was also undertaken in order to determine the character and date of any remains and they were photographed, described and, drawn, as appropriate.

All the work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IFA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*. The trenches were located by taking measurements to known points and the final plans were completed with the aid of TurboCad v.15 design software.

Results

Four trenches were excavated in the development area; their exact location was determined on site by factors such as the presence of services and other constraints and the need to preserve access to the area. The location of the trenches is shown in Figure 2 and the dimensions of the trenches is summarised in Table 1.

Trench	Orientation	Length (m)	Width (m)	Min. Depth (m)	Max. Depth (m)	Archaeology identified?
1	E-W	30	1.6	0.36	0.70	no
2	E-W	20	1.6	0.43	0.60	no
3	E-W	30	1.6	0.14	0.50	no
4	NW-SE	30	1.6	0.24	0.37	no

Table 1: Trench dimensions

Trench 1 was located in the lowest and most southern part of the investigation area on land currently used as a car park. There was no topsoil, as the ground had evidently previously been excavated down to the natural subsoil, before layering of hard core for the creation of the car park. A service, packed with gravel and believed to be part of the drainage system from the all-weather pitch was encountered two metres from the eastern end of the trench. The natural subsoil consisted of orange-brown clay with small rounded pebbles. No archaeological features were observed and no finds recovered.

Trench 2 was positioned at the top of the slope, to the south of the all weather pitch, in order to sample ground that had not been previously surfaced (unlike the all-weather pitch and car park). The ground was extremely dry. An area of disturbance on the southern edge of the trench, consisting of topsoil and a fragment of concrete, may represent an earlier fence-line or even pressed in rubble from landscaping. The topsoil consisted of loose, mid-brown silty sand with occasional concrete and modern brick rubble. There was no clearly defined subsoil and the natural subsoil below consisted of reddish orange sandy clay. No archaeological features were observed or finds recovered.

Trenches 3 and 4 were excavated within the boundaries of the all-weather pitch at the top of the slope. In Trench 3, natural subsoil was encountered immediately below the pitch surface and consisted of reddish brown slightly sandy clay. Deeper excavations at the eastern end of the trench indicated that this subsoil was compact and uniform in colour and texture, therefore not suggesting that it had been re-deposited, as might have been expected in this area. The trench was crossed by a series of four gravel-filled drains, orientated approximately north-south and spaced approximately 7m apart. No evidence of archaeology was observed.

Trench 4 was excavated on a different alignment to the other three and aimed to sample the north-western part of the development area. Natural subsoil was encountered directly below the pitch surface and consisted of clean orange brown silty-clay sand with medium rounded pebbles. A service trench on a north-south alignment was observed at the north-west end of the trench and a gravel-filled drain,

similar to those seen in Trench 3 and on the same alignment, crossed the central portion of the trench. The trench did not produce any archaeological evidence.

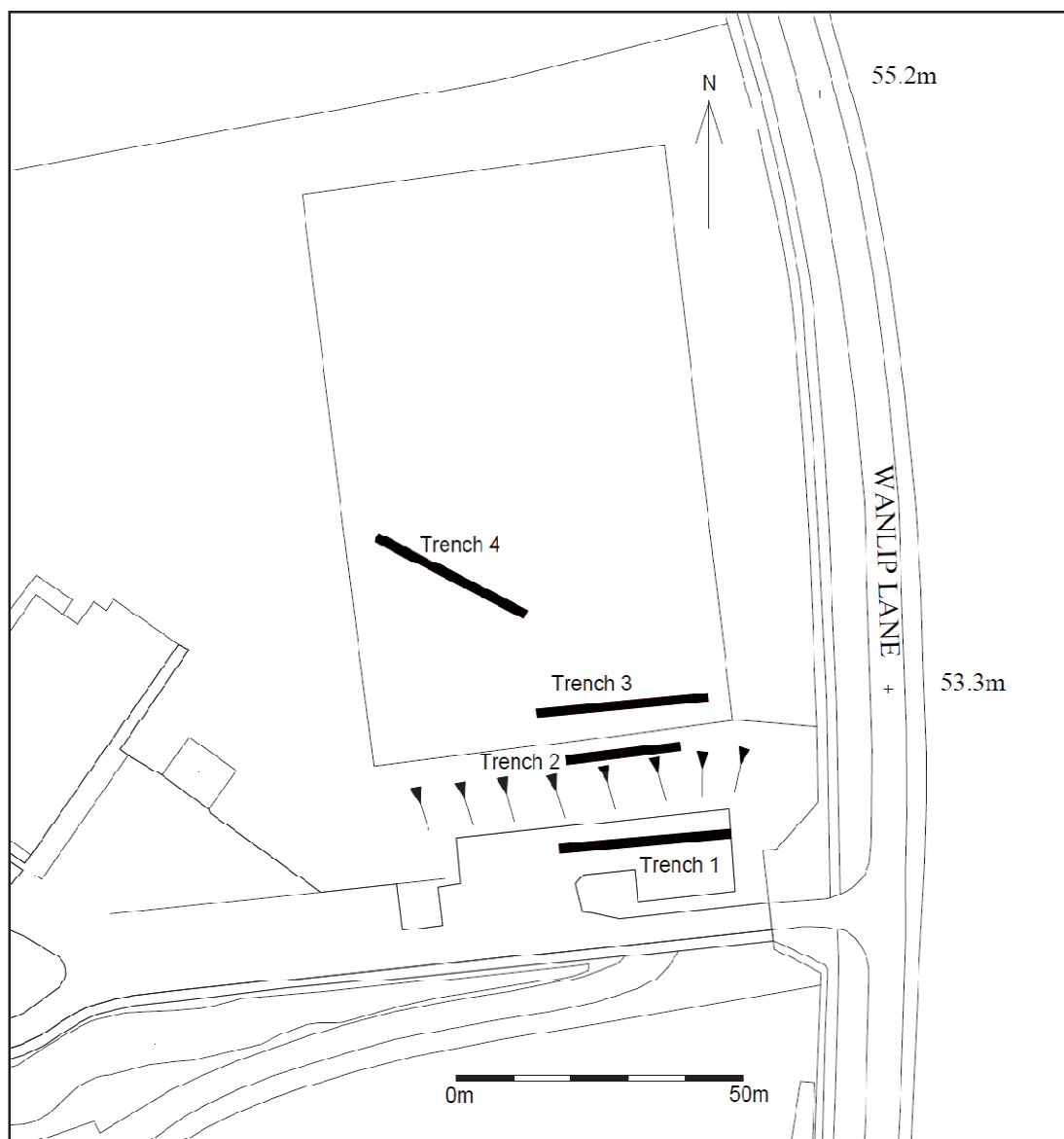


Figure 2: Trench location plan

Conclusion

Topsoil and, possibly subsoil, appears to have been stripped and the ground levelled during the construction of the car park and all weather pitch areas. A number of gravel-filled channels, believed to have functioned as drains were noted beneath the all-weather pitch, possibly leading to a wider service seen in the car park area, where Trench 1 was excavated. No archaeological deposits or finds were encountered during the course of this work.

Archive

A full copy of the archive as defined in Brown (2008) includes all written, drawn and photographic records relating to the investigations undertaken.

The archive consists of:

A copy of the report,
 4 x trench recording sheets,
 Colour digital photographs and black and white negatives and contact sheet,
 1 x photographic index,

The report is 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/>

Oasis Summary

INFORMATION REQUIRED	
Project Name	Longslade Community College
Project Type	Evaluation (Trial Trenching)
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Jennifer Browning
Previous/Future work	Desk-based assessment
Current Land Use	Car park and all-weather sports pitch
Development Type	Multipurpose building (cultural/educational/recreational facility)
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	Planning Application P/08/0981/2
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK 596 103
Start/end dates of field work	18/08/10
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums, Arts and records Service
Study Area	c. 0.6 ha

Acknowledgements

The site work was carried out by Siobhan Brocklehurst and the author and the project was managed by Richard Buckley. We would like to thank Brian Jones of Longslade Community College and staff of Wilmott Dixon for their help and co-operation during this evaluation.

Bibliography

Brown, D., 2008 *Standard and Guidance for the preparation of Archaeological Archives* (Institute for Archaeologists)

Liddle, P. 1980, An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Wanlip, Leicestershire. *Transactions of the Leicestershire and Rutland Archaeological and Historical Society* 55, 11-21.

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 ULAS Report 2010-110

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