

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Hennis Field Farm, Sutton on the Hill



View of the existing bungalow and the stripped trench

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2009 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Mike Smith to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Hennis Field Farm, Sutton on the Hill. The monitoring was carried out during ground works for a new property.

The proposal site lies within the HER 26703, an extensive area of cropmarks plotted from aerial photographs that probably relate to prehistoric or Romano-British occupation. The cropmarks include linear ditches and possible trackways, ring ditches and enclosures, as well as ploughed out ridge and furrow.

The watching brief involved the archaeological supervision of the topsoil strip with the view that the job could develop into a strip, map and record exercise if archaeological visibility was achieved at the level of the strip.

The strip removed the topsoil down on to natural subsoil and no features or finds of archaeological significance or buried land surfaces were revealed.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Location and scope of work

1.1.1. In August 2009 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Mike Smith to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Hennis Field Farm, Sutton on the Hill (Fig. 1). The proposal site lies within HER 26703, an extensive area of cropmarks plotted from aerial photographs probably relating to prehistoric or Romano-British occupation activity. The watching brief was carried out during ground works for the development of a new property. The proposed location of the new building has been amended since the initial planning proposal. As a result, a slightly larger area was stripped and monitored to take this change into account.

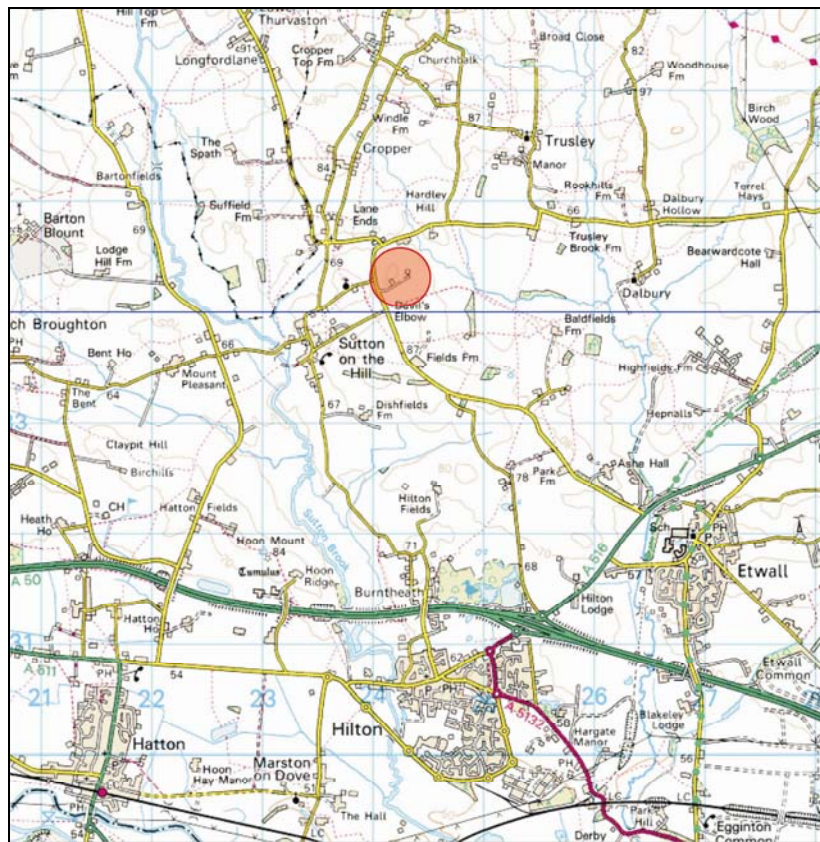


Fig. 1 Site location

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1.1.2. The site is centred at SK 2432 3434 and is approximately 9 miles east of Derby, off the A516. The area for the new building is located directly behind an existing bungalow which will eventually be demolished to make way for the new building. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2 View of the garden prior to the strip.

1.2. Geology

- 1.2.1 While the solid geology in this part of the Trent Valley is a complex mix of mudstones, sandstones and other sedimentary rocks, the dominant geology is the overlying fluvio-glacial sands and gravels (Knight and Howard 2004, 5-6).

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The specification required that a watching brief should be carried out to observe any ground works taking place for the proposed development, in order to identify any potential archaeological remains. This involved monitoring the topsoil strip of the proposed area with a view to undertaking a strip, map and record exercise if archaeological visibility and archaeological remains identified following the topsoil strip.
- 2.2 The location of the proposed bungalow has been amended since the initial planning proposal. The current works took this amendment into consideration and excavated a slightly larger area (2m extra around the edge) so that any subsequent archaeological monitoring would not be required. The total area stripped measured approximately 15m by 28m. (Fig. 3)
- 2.3 The trench was excavated by machine, using a back-acting toothless ditching bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. The machine removed the topsoil (001) in level spits until the desired level was reached (002). No archaeological features were revealed during this process.

- 2.4 The spoil was inspected during the excavation and sample sieved for small finds. No finds were found of an early post-medieval date, or earlier.



Fig. 3 Plan of Hennis field Farm showing the trench.

3. RESULTS

3.1 *Topsoil*

The topsoil (001) covered the whole of the stripped area and varied between 0.30m and 0.45m in depth. It consisted of a fine mid-brown silty clay material with inclusions of small stones and flecks of burnt lime which is consistent with the area being used for agriculture in the past.

3.2 *Subsoil*

The subsoil (002) was found to exist below the topsoil across the whole of the stripped area. It consisted of a fine grained, compact, orange-brown clay material with few inclusions of small stones. The context was not excavated and therefore the depth was not determined.

- 3.4 No features, finds or deposits of archaeological significance were revealed during the excavation process. (Figs. 4 and 5)



Fig. 4 View of the trench showing the clay subsoil (002) found below the topsoil (001)



Fig. 5 View of the completed trench.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1. There were no archaeological features, deposits, buried land surfaces or small finds located within the trench. This is likely to be due to the long history of ploughing in this field which may have destroyed any evidence of the cropmarks identified from aerial photographs.

5. PUBLICITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COPYRIGHT

- 5.1. Any publicity will be handled by the client.
- 5.2. Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

6. STATEMENT OF INDEMNITY

- 6.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1. Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved in this project, in particular the client Mike Smith.

8. REFERENCES

Knight, D. and A.J. Howard. 2004. *Trent Valley Landscapes. The Archaeology of 500,000 Years of Change*. King's Lynn, Heritage Marketing and Publications Ltd.