



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at the
Riverside Nursery, Market Harborough
Leicestershire

June 2006



Jim Brown

June 2006

Report 06/099

Northamptonshire Archaeology

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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
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Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at the Riverside Nursery, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, June 2006	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Trial trenches in the area of the development identified furrows from medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation but no other archaeological features or deposits were present.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Waste ground	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	None	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	Riverside Nursery, Market Harborough, Leicestershire	
Study area	1.1 ha approx.	
OS Easting & Northing	474400 288030	
Height OD	c82-89m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Richard Clarke, Leicestershire County Council	
Project Design originator	Paul Gajos, John Samuels Archaeological Consultants	
Director/Supervisor	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Bill Boismier, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	MDA Consulting	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	June 2006	
End date	June 2006	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content
Physical		None
Paper		Site Trench Record, Photographic Record, Levels & Client Report
Digital		Client Report
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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(www.getmapping.com)
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION AT
RIVERSIDE NURSERY, MARKET HARBOROUGH
LEICESTERSHIRE**

JUNE 2006

Trial excavation by Northamptonshire Archaeology in the area of the proposed development at Riverside Nursery, Market Harborough established a general absence of archaeological deposits. The surface of the natural substrate, identified in each trench, had been cut by medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow and was sealed below subsoil, topsoil and rubbish associated with the former nursery. Modern overburden was absent in the trenches.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC), acting on behalf of MDA Consulting, to conduct an archaeological evaluation at the Riverside Nursery, Market Harborough, Leicestershire (NGR 474400 288030: Fig 1). The work was undertaken in compliance with PPG16 under the advice of Leicestershire County Council to inform the planning decisions of Harborough District Council for the development (Planning Application: 05/01903/FUL).

The project was conducted to a specification prepared by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants in accordance with the recommendations of the Senior Planning Archaeologist (JSAC 2006). All works were approved by the Senior Planning Archaeologist.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Archaeological background

No previous archaeological work has been conducted on the site and little information is known about its archaeological potential.

- A ground investigation report by BSB Consulting described the site as generally 0.5m topsoil overlying Middle Lias Clay, comprising grey mottled orange brown clay substrate (BSB 2006, NTB044SE/01/V1).

- Market Harborough is thought to have been a Roman town. Little is understood about the morphology of the settlement, but Roman artefacts have been recovered from along the Ridgeway (MLE 1948; MLE 15871; MLE 6481). Artefacts of Iron Age and Saxon date are also mentioned in the Historic Environment Resource.
- No findspots are located in the vicinity of the development, the lack of recent ground disturbance suggests a good potential for well preserved remains if present.
- Historic maps show the site to have been open land until its use as a tree nursery in 1999. The Midland Railway and associated sidings form the western site boundary predate the 1886 Ordnance Survey County Series. By 1961 the first buildings of the Riverside Industrial Estate were built to the south of the site, with an engineering works along the southern boundary.

2.2 Topography and geology

The site is 1.1 ha in area. It is located at the northern edge of the Riverside Industrial Estate off the Rockingham Road (A4304). The site lies to the east of the Midland Railway, on the parish boundary separating Market Harborough from Great Bowden. It is bounded by the railway to the west, fields to the north and east and by industrial development to the south and south-east. The site is waste ground overgrown with stinging nettles, blackberries and hemlock. It is strewn with rubbish from the former tree nursery and is inhabited by foxes.

Ground investigation on the site identified the geology as Middle Lias Clay (BSB 2006). The site is located on an east facing slope overlooking the River Welland. The ground level slopes downwards from the north-west of the site at c82-89m OD, getting steeper towards the south-east. The slope reaches the valley floor c130m to the south-east of the main gate.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation was conducted to provide information that contributes towards more informed decisions within the planning process and an enhanced understanding of the potential of the archaeological resource on the site of the former Riverside Nursery, Market Harborough. The specific objectives of the evaluation were:

- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits;
- and to establish where possible the nature, approximate date, extent, function, state of preservation and depth of burial of the deposits if present;

If significant archaeological remains were encountered, the further objectives were:

- to assess the artefactual and environmental potential of these deposits;
- to place the remains within their local, regional and national context together with further information on the historic character of the local area;
- and to produce a site archive for deposition with the Leicestershire County Store and information for access in the local SMR.

Fieldwork was conducted in June 2006. Five trenches were located according to the specification to assess the site (Fig 2). The excavation of the trenches was conducted using a JCB fitted with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket. Trenches were set out to their full extent and no obstructions or service lines were encountered at the level of the substrate. All machine operation was carried out under continuous archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated until the natural substrate was encountered. Potential archaeological features were investigated by hand. No artefactual material predating the 20th century was found. A site record was maintained using pro-forma Northamptonshire Archaeology trench record sheets supplemented by photographs on both colour and monochrome 35mm film as appropriate. A single continuous context numbering sequence was employed with a unique number assigned to each event that was recorded in the paper archive. Levels were established in relation to Ordnance Datum and the trench positions were recorded in relation to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

4 RESULTS

The remnants of medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation were present within the trenches in the form of truncated furrows, but there was a general absence of other archaeological features and deposits. Trenches in the north-west of the site were comparable to those in the south-east of the site. The natural Middle Lias Clay was encountered across the site between c81.55-88.6m OD. The impact of periglacial processes was limited and there was very little variation in the drift geology. Root disturbance below the level of the subsoil was high and at several points large tree stumps had to be removed with the machine bucket, the roots of which penetrated the substrate.

Cultivation furrows were evident in Trench 5, aligned north-east to south-west following the gradient of the hillside. These furrows were no more than 60mm deep and

approximately 1.2m wide. They were distributed at c5m intervals. No datable materials were recovered from the furrows, but they would be of medieval or post-medieval origin.

Modern features were visible cut into the natural clay and orientated roughly north to south. These were generally no more than 300mm wide and were filled with medium grade coarse gravel and were not disturbed by the archaeological works. They are likely to have been water pipes supplying stand pipes in the former tree nursery, or land drains.

A couple of areas of compact red brick-bat surfaces, one course thick and 1.6m wide were observed during machining Trench 5. They were laid upon compacted hardcore overlying the natural substrate and were probably associated with former nursery structures on the site, such as greenhouses.

The natural clay was overlain by firm dark greyish-brown silty clay subsoil with few inclusions beyond occasional rounded or angular stones up to 30mm in diameter. The subsoil was evenly distributed and was roughly 250mm thick across the site. The topsoil comprised firm dark brownish-grey silty loam containing frequent vegetative disturbance. It was less evenly spread across the site, being mounded up in places and was roughly 100-200mm thick. Mounds of rubbish were piled on top of the topsoil and overgrown with vegetation in parts of the site.

5 DISCUSSION

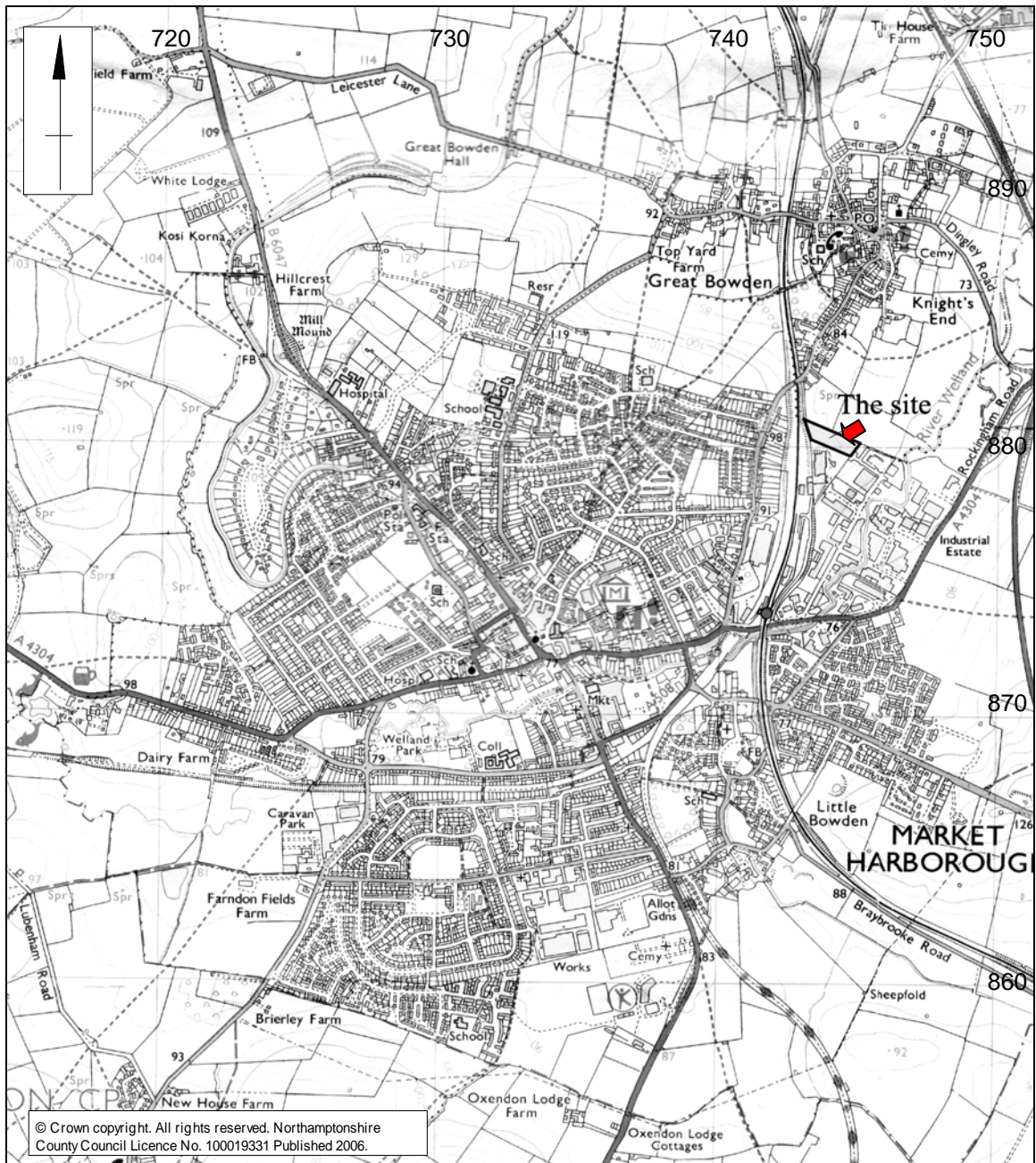
None of the trenches produced residual artefacts pre-dating the 20th century and there was a general absence of archaeological features. Medieval or post-medieval furrows of a ridge and furrow field system were identified, investigated and found to be largely truncated, surviving to a maximum of 60mm depth and suggesting that the site had been heavily ploughed. The thickness of the subsoil was evenly distributed across the site so it seems less likely to have been the result of ground preparation prior to the nursery. The topsoil had certainly been transferred downhill and it was clear that planting activity on the site had caused considerable root disturbance at depth.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

JSAC 2006 *A specification for archaeological investigation (strip, map and sample) of Land at Nursery Site OS4300, Riverside, Market Harborough, Leicestershire*, John Samuels Archaeological Consultants

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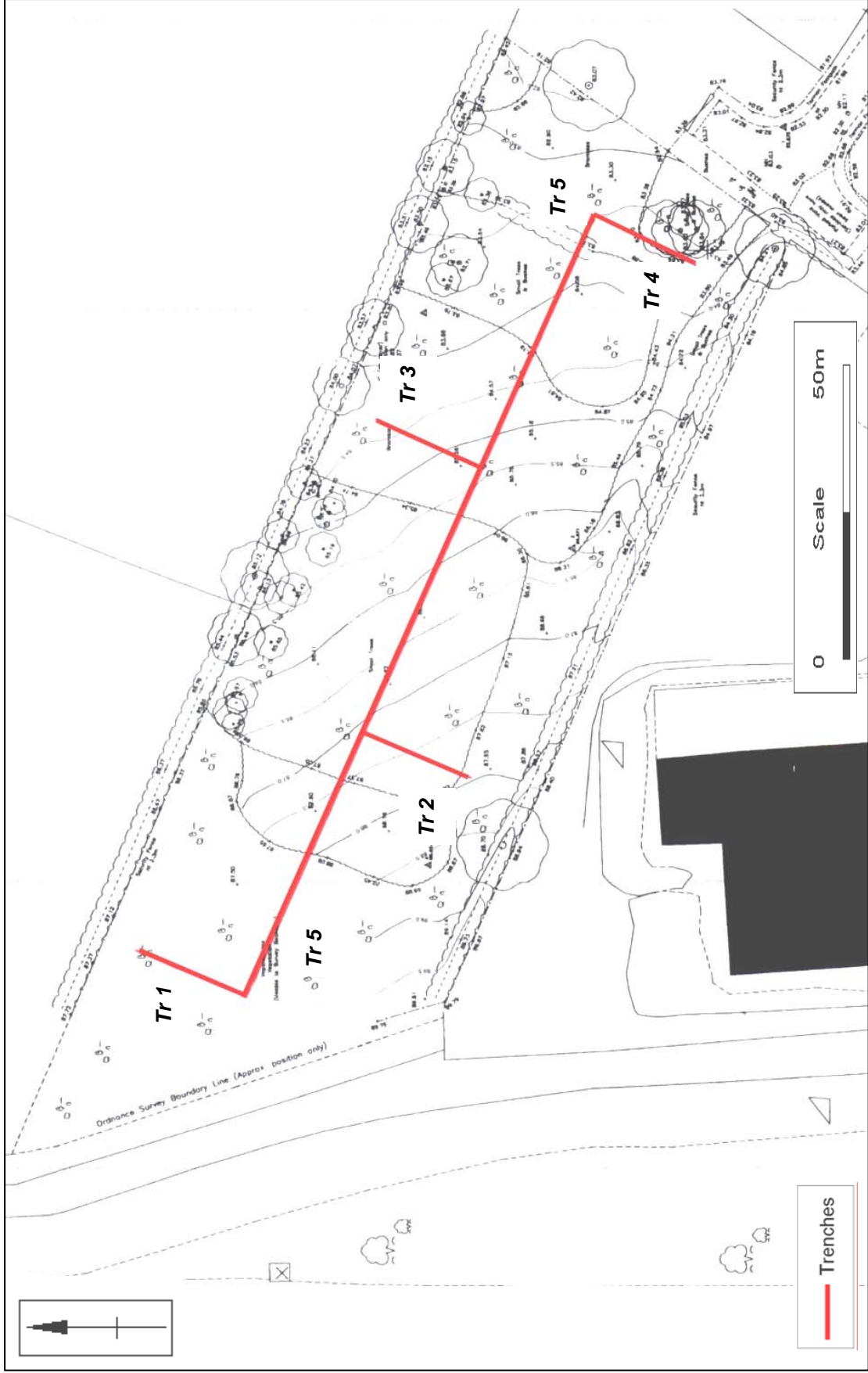
27th June 2006



Scale 1:25,000

Site location

Fig 1



Scale 1:1000

Trench locations Fig 2



Plate 1



Plate 2