University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation On Land south of Soar Valley Way, Enderby, Leicestershire NGR: SP 554 998

Roger Kipling

ULAS Report No 2012-059
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An Archaeological Evaluation

On Land south of Soar Valley Way,

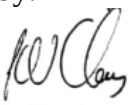
Enderby, Leicestershire

NGR: SP 554 998

Roger Kipling

For: Everards Limited

Approved by:

Signed: 

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An Archaeological Evaluation on Land to the south of Soar Valley Way, Enderby, Leicestershire

[NGR: SP 554 998]

Roger Kipling

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in March 2012 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Everards Limited. The fieldwork was a pre-determination requirement on a proposed planning application for commercial development on land south of Soar Valley Way, Enderby, Leicestershire, in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains may be assessed by the Planning Authority and an appropriate mitigation strategy put in place.

The archaeological evaluation revealed some evidence for archaeological activity, probably of stock agricultural character of late prehistoric and/or early Roman date. This agricultural activity appeared to be concentrated in the western part of the site, with a possible concentration of Roman activity centred on the south-west corner. Archaeological features included a small rectangular stock enclosure associated with a possible pond or watering hole feature. A number of ditches identified in the vicinity may have been functionally linked to this arrangement, possibly as drove roads. The absence of archaeological evidence in the eastern area is possibly explained by a variation in the geology between the upslope, more permeable geology of sands and gravels (hence more suited to settlement observed to the west, and as such atypical of the locality) and the heavier, alluvial geology characterising the eastern part of the site.

The site archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A33.2012.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the south of Soar Way, Enderby, Leicestershire. The application site lies within an area of archaeological potential, as indicated by an archaeological desk-based assessment and geophysical survey of the area (Hunt 2012, Smalley 2012). In addition, the application area lies close to sites of some archaeological significance and listed on the Historic Environment Record (HER).

In view of the potential impact of the development upon archaeological remains, in pursuance of Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) Policy HE6, and following recommendations by the Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Senior Planning Archaeologist, the planning authority required that evaluation by trial trenching be undertaken to further define and characterise the remains suggested by the results from the geophysical survey. The fieldwork specified was intended to provide further

indications of character and extent of any buried archaeological remains in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains might be assessed. Fieldwork was carried out between February and March 2012 and involved the machine excavation of 16 trial trenches in order to assess the archaeological potential of the development area.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5, Planning and the Historic Environment). All archaeological work was in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct (2010) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008). The LCC *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland* (1997) was also adhered to.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The site lies in Enderby, approximately 1.5km east-north-east of the village core and around 5km south-west of Leicester city centre and occupies a rectangular area of *c*.7.7ha that is bounded by Narborough Road South to the west and the A563 Soar Valley Way to the north. To the south is the Police Headquarters and to the east are more enclosed fields. The site is centred on National Grid Reference SP 554 998. The British Geological Survey of England and Wales, sheet 156 (Leicester) shows the geology of the area is likely to be Glaciofluvial Deposits (sand and gravel) over most of the site, with Oadby Member Till at the western edge. The largely level site lies at a height of *c*.68m. The development area is currently a field containing an arable crop and a number of trees.

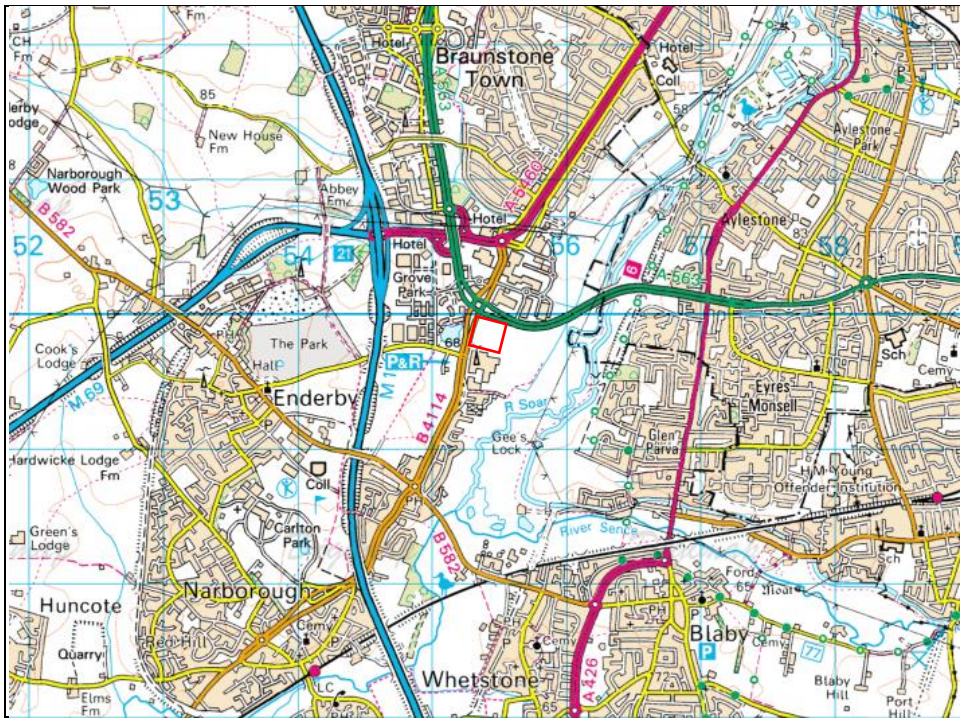

Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)
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Archaeological and Historical Background

An earlier archaeological desk-based assessment and geophysical survey of the area (Hunt 2011) indicated that the application area lies within an area of some archaeological significance, as listed on the Historic Environment Record (HER). This shows that there are visible cropmarks within the field itself (HER refs: **MLE16568** & **MLE16569**) which are most likely prehistoric or possibly Roman in date. One appears to be a double ditch.

Several known archaeological sites lie in the immediate vicinity of the assessment area, as summarised below. A Palaeolithic handaxe was found around 350m south of the site in the early 20th century (**MLE6041**), whilst an additional late Palaeolithic flint implement has recently (October 2011) been located 600m west of the site, north of Leicester Lane, Enderby (W. Jarvis pers.comm.). A group of around 100 flint tools, dating from the Neolithic period to the Iron Age were found during the excavation of an Iron Age site around 800m to the north-west of the site (**MLE7123**), and a scatter of flint material and sherds of pottery dating from the Neolithic to Early Bronze Age were found 300m south-east of the site (**MLE7377**). A substantial Iron Age site was discovered south-west of Grove Farm Triangle, which lies around 800m from the edge of the site, in the 1980s and 1990s, which showed evidence of metal working as well as enclosure ditches and roundhouses (**MLE79**). Further evidence for occupation during the Iron Age was discovered just south of Ratby Meadow Lane, around 300m south-east of the site (**MLE96**) and in an area 600m to the west of the site, where further houses and human remains were discovered (**MLE112**). Recent trial trench evaluation (October 2011) has located evidence of another late Iron Age settlement 600m to the west, north of Leicester Lane, Enderby (W. Jarvis pers. comm.).

Excavations by ULAS on the Park and Ride site 300m to the south-east of the site revealed evidence for further two Iron Age houses and a double ditch system (**MLE16060** & **MLE16060;** Harvey 2011). The area was occupied into the Roman period (see below).

Roman

The site lies almost adjacent to the line of the Roman road known as the Fosse Way (**MLE1380**). Metal detecting along the route close to the Grove Farm Triangle, yielded Roman brooches, a coin and a copper alloy seal box lid (**MLE7684**). Seven Roman coins were found by metal detector around 320m north-west of the site (**MLE7686**), whilst a buckle and a brooch were found on a site around 700m south-west of the site (**MLE7688**). Excavations at the Park and Ride site excavation in 2008 revealed six Roman burials in very poor condition, including of two male and one female skeletons (Harvey 2011, 56-62).

Medieval

A copper alloy find, possibly a dagger pommel, was found on a site close to the Grove Farm Triangle, 300m north-west of the site (**MLE6620**). Eight medieval coins were found nearby (**MLE6622**). A medieval seal matrix was discovered at the Park and Ride site (**MLE17729**).

Aims and Methods

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to:

1. Identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
2. Establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by proposed ground-works.
3. Record any archaeological deposits to affected by the ground-works.
4. Produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation 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 development. All work was recorded in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, the standard policy and practice of ULAS. The University of Leicester's Health and Safety policy was adhered to.

The programme of archaeological evaluation consisted of a sample targeting the cropmarks, geophysical survey and some blank areas totalling *c*.864 sq m. of trenching, the equivalent of sixteen 30m x 1.8m trenches. This followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (ULAS 2012) approved by the LCC Senior Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the planning authority who also monitored the fieldwork.

Excavation was undertaken using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket, with topsoil and overburden removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

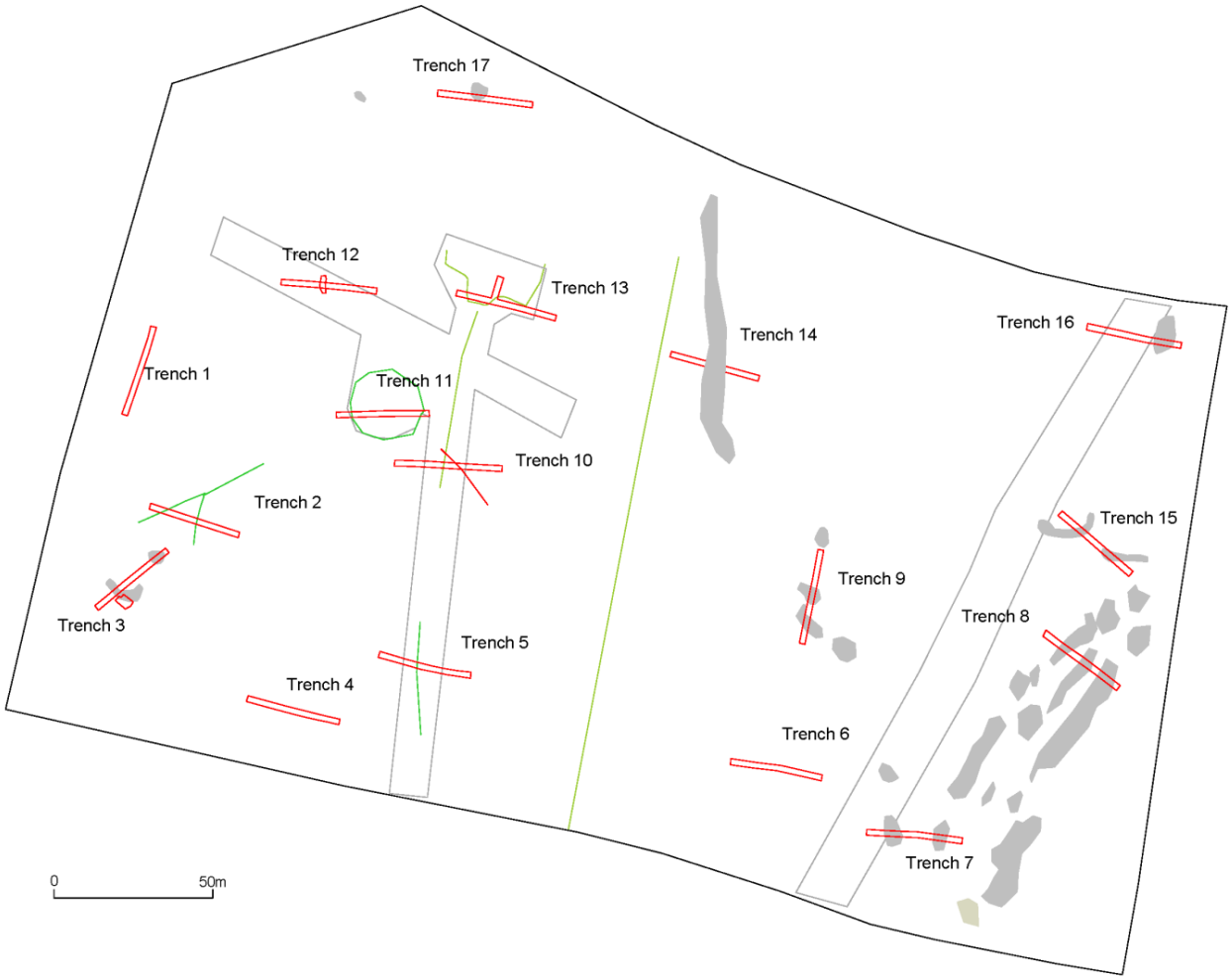

Figure 2: Trench locations (red) in relation to cropmarks (green) and geophysical anomalies (grey)

Results

Trench 1
Trench 1, located midway along the western site boundary and aligned broadly north-south, measured 29.5m x 1.8m and between 0.30m and 0.47m in depth. 0.25m-0.28m of a dark grey-brown loam plough soil overlay a thin, 0.06m-0.15m thick dark orange-brown silty clay subsoil, in turn overlying orange-brown natural clay. There were no indications of archaeology in the trench, with the exception of two shallow (0.03m-0.04m deep) possible plough furrows which crossed the trench midway along its length.

Trench 2 (Figure 3, Figure 4)
Located a short distance south of Trench 1, Trench 2 (29.5m x 1.8m x 0.36m-0.67m) targeted a possible crop mark feature. Removal of 0.24m-0.28m of plough soil and 0.10m-0.35m of subsoil revealed a substantial single ditch [10] traversing the eastern end of the trench on a north-east to south-west alignment. The heavily truncated feature measured 2.8m wide and 0.3m-0.4m deep; the single dark greyish-brown silty sand fill [11] produced no finds.

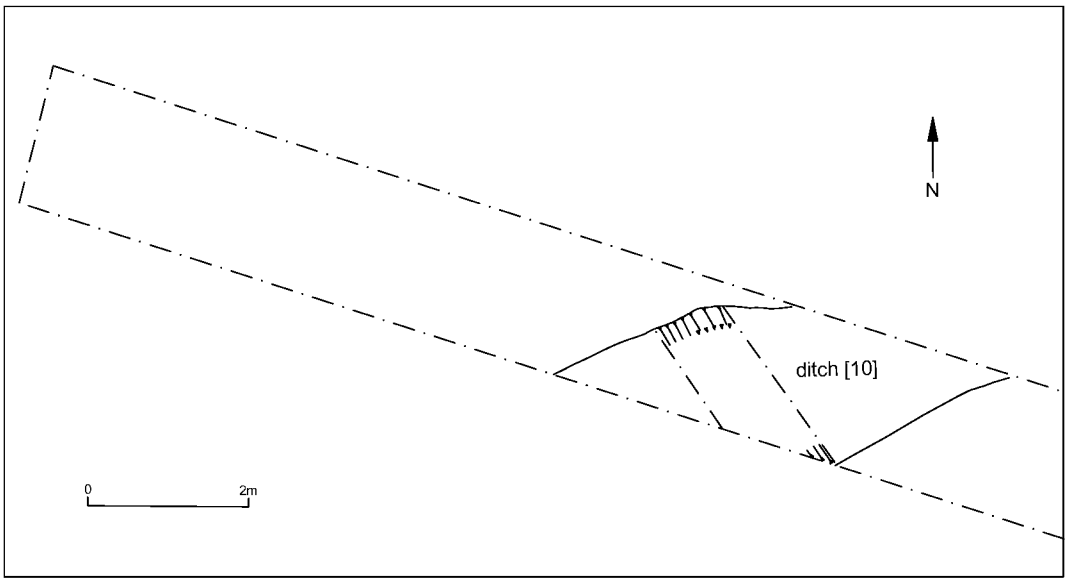

Figure 3: Ditch [10], Trench 2

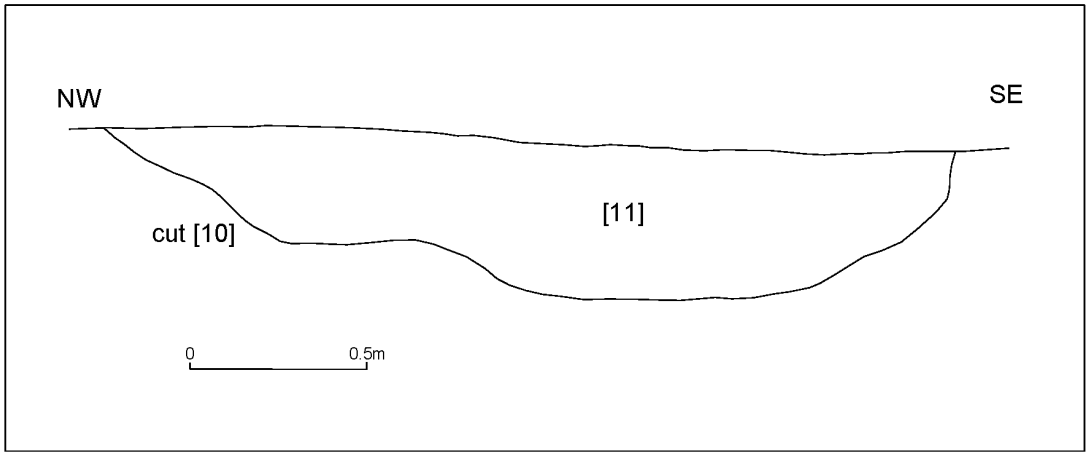

Figure 4: Ditch [10] section

Trench 3 (
Figure 7,
Figure 6,

Figure 7, Figure 8)

Trench 3 (30m x 1.8m x 0.30m-65m) occupied the south-east corner of the site. Topsoil 0.15m-0.35m deep and 0.10m-0.30m of subsoil overlay a pale yellow-brown sandy clay. A small group of features occupied the midpoint of the trench, consisting of two ditches [01 & 03] measuring (1.9m+ long, 0.70m deep and 0.80m wide and 2.20m+ long, 0.70m deep and 0.90m wide respectively) entering the trench from the south-west and intersecting at a right angle. It was not possible to ascertain whether the features butt ended here or instead continued further north. Ditch [01] produced a single abraded sherd of Central Gaulish colour-coated ware pottery, probably from a hemispherical cup, and dating from the mid-2nd to the mid-3rd century although, given its condition, it may be residual in this context. A second Roman pottery sherd came from the second ditch, [3], and dates to between the 2nd and the 4th century. (N. Cooper, Appendix One).

Ditch [01] truncated a possible shallow pit [05] (1.20m diameter x 0.20m deep), and ditch [03] cut a partially stone-lined shallow circular feature [07], the base of which showed signs of exposure to heat and therefore may represent a hearth. The opening of a secondary sondage to the south of the trench appeared to reveal more of ditch [03] turning sharply westwards.

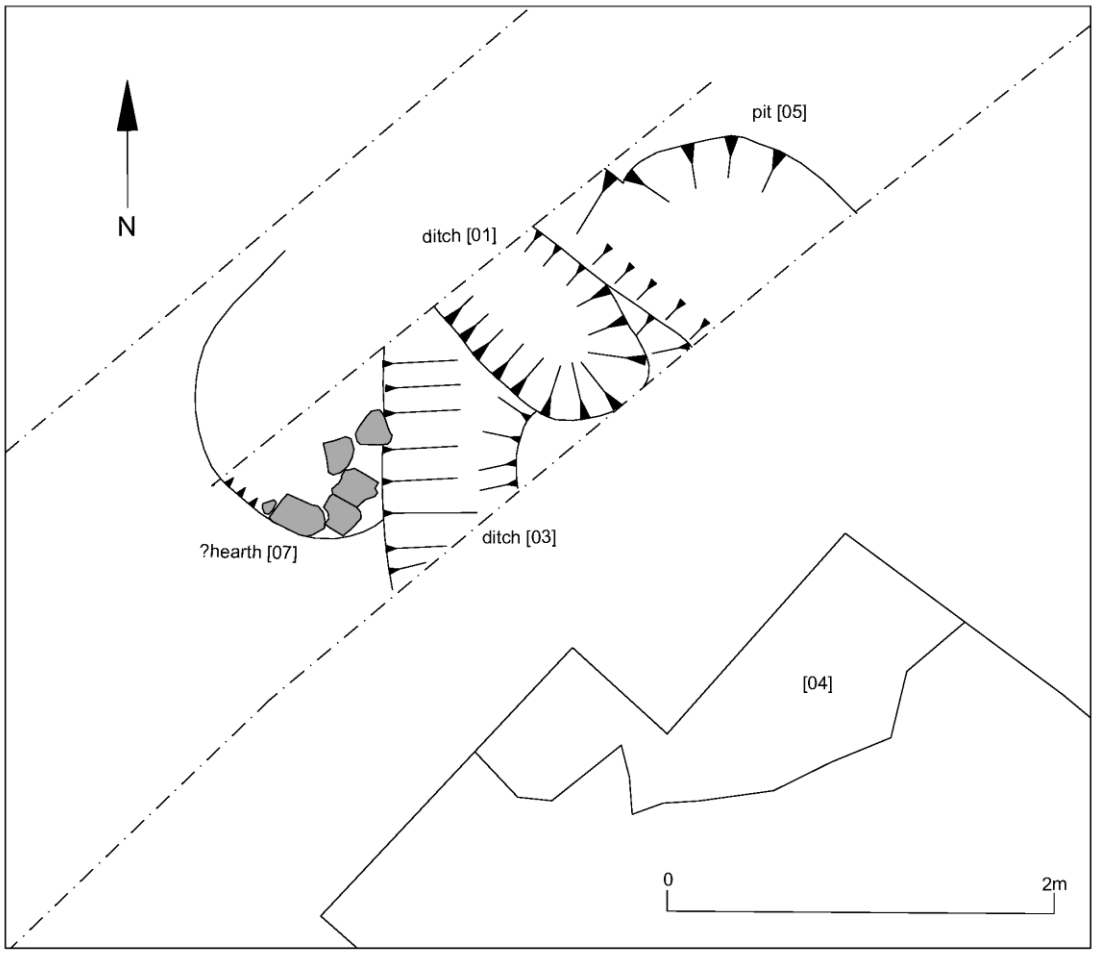

Figure 5: Trench 3 plan

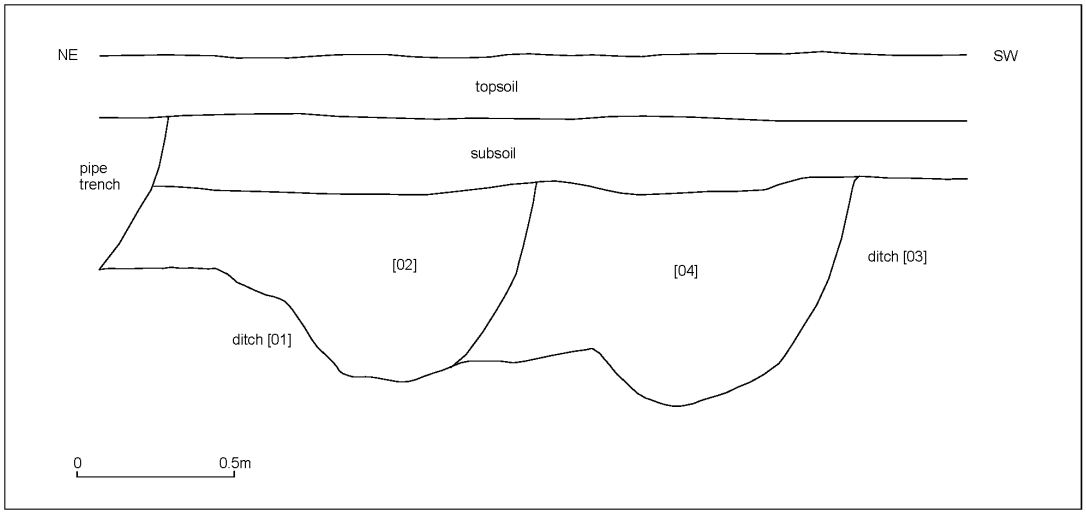

Figure 6: Trench 3; section across features

Figure 7: Trench 3; ditches [01] & [03]; view looking south-west, scales 1m

Figure 8: Trench 3, southern end, view looking north, scales: 1m

Trench 4 (32.30m x 1.80m x 0.46m-1.0m deep), was located in the southern area of the site. Removal of 0.23m-0.38m of topsoil and 0.08m-0.30m of mid orange-brown subsoil revealed pale orange-brown natural sands and gravels but no archaeological deposits.

Trench 5 (Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11, Figure 12), (30m x 1.80m x 0.45m-0.58m deep) located adjacent to Trench 4, was positioned in order to target an anomaly identified in the geophysical survey. Excavation revealed two heavily truncated ditches, the western of the two, [16], aligned broadly north-south and measuring 1.15m wide and 0.24m deep, with a rounded profile. The second, more substantial ditch, [18], was aligned north-west to south-east and measured 3.90m+, 1.80m wide and 0.50m deep, and with a more open, rounded, profile than the first. Neither feature produced any finds.

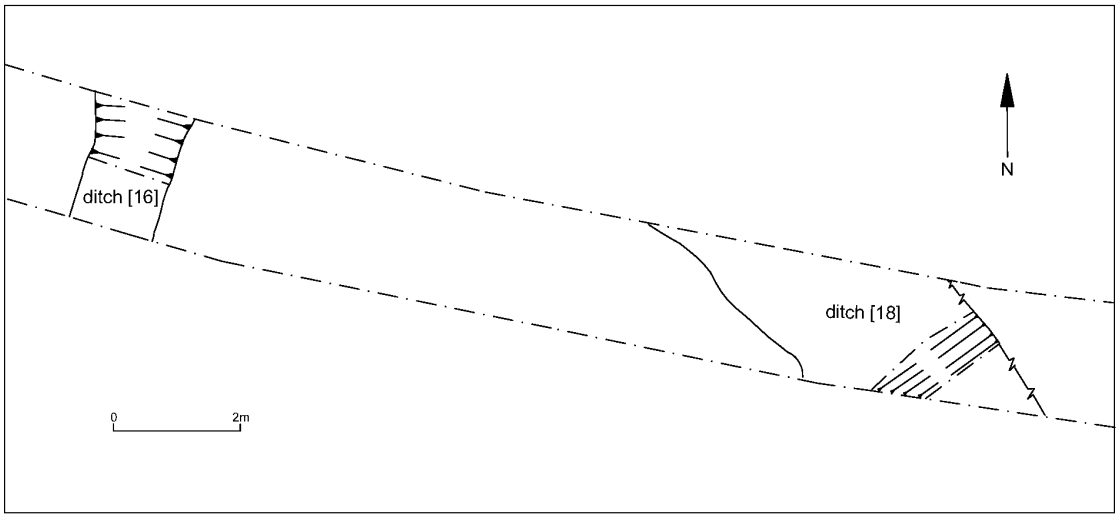

Figure 9: Trench 5: plan of features at western end

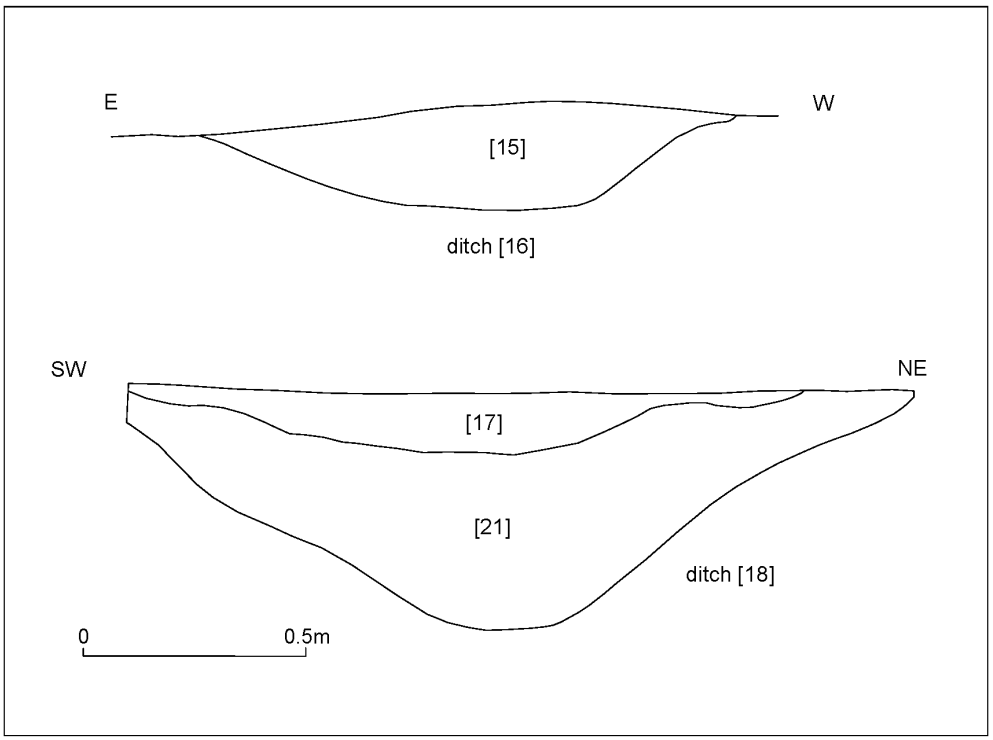

Figure 10: Trench 5 sections

Figure 11: Trench 5; linear feature [16]; view south; scale 1m

Figure 12: Trench 5, ditch [18]; view north-west; scale 1m

Trenches 6, 7, 8 & 9 were located in the eastern area of the site, characterised by a wetter, more alluvial geology, which likely explains the total absence of archaeological activity in this area. All trenches featured natural orange-brown clay and silty sands and gravels

Trench 10 (Figure 13 - 15) measured 34m x 1.80m x 0.28m-0.42m deep and was centrally located, midway between Trench 5 to the south and Trench 13 to the north. The eastern end of the trench was occupied by a substantial but heavily-truncated

ditch and a probable modern drain feature. The former, [36], with an open v-shaped profile and measuring 1.7m wide and 0.65m deep, crossed the trench on a north-south alignment. The drain, [40], consisted of a shallow upper cut on its western edge with a sharper eastern side dropping to a near-vertical cut. A capped drystone granite drain, [44], was built into the western side of the drain cut. Neither feature produced any finds.

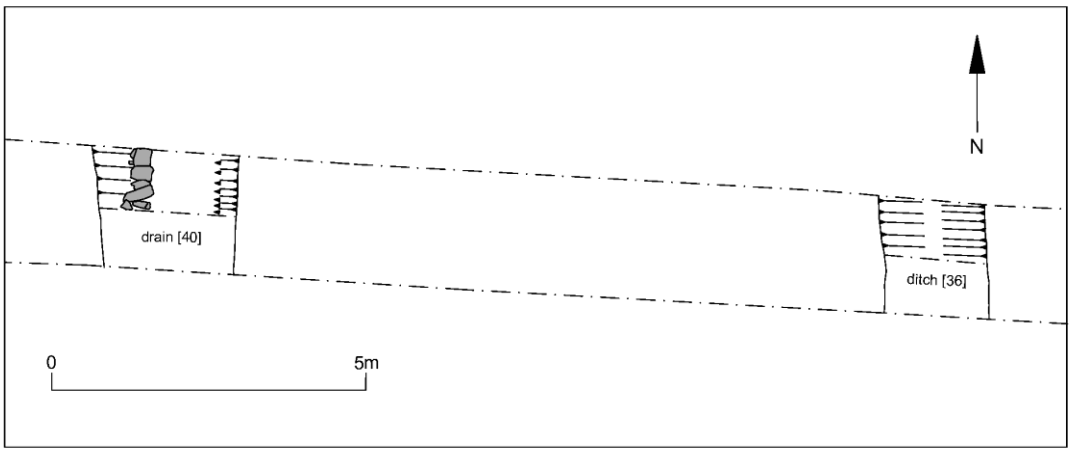

Figure 13: Plan of features at eastern end of Trench 10

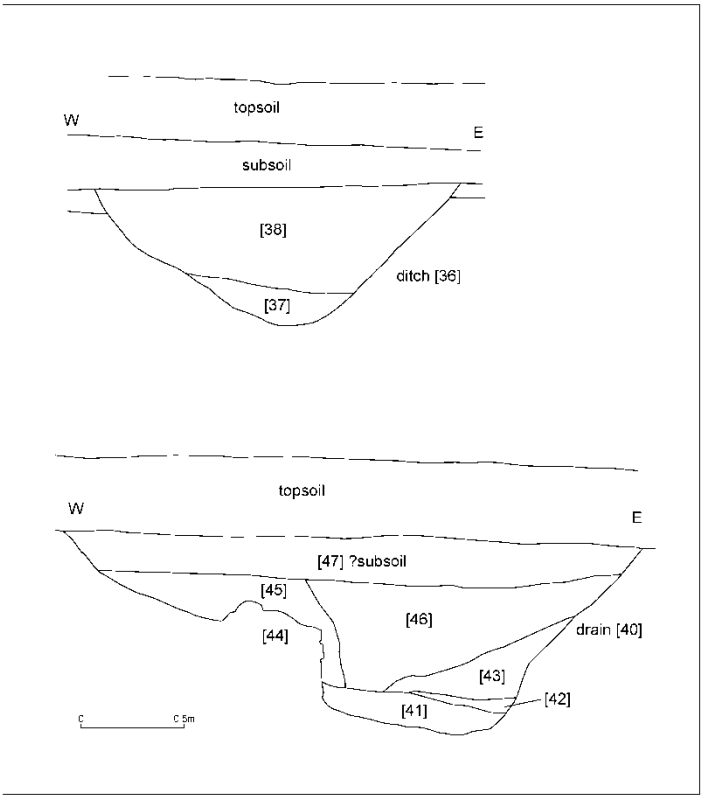

Figure 14: Trench 10: sections

Figure 15: Trench 10, drain [40]; view north, 1m scale

Trench 11 (Figure 16, Figure 17), located in the central area of the site and measuring 30m x 1.90m x 0.45m-0.75m, was occupied by a single open U-shaped truncated ditch, [19] (1.90m x 1.05m x 0.25m) aligned broadly north-west to south-east. Its single sandy clay-silt fill produced no finds. The probable same feature was identified to the north in Trench 12 (see below).

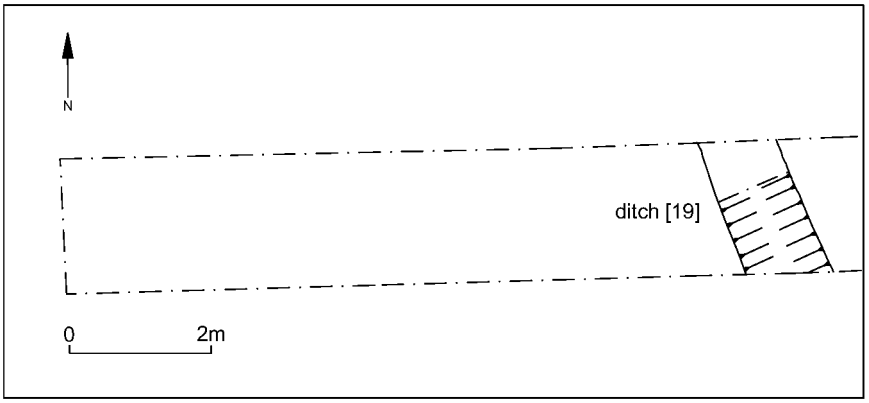

Figure 16: Plan of Trench 11

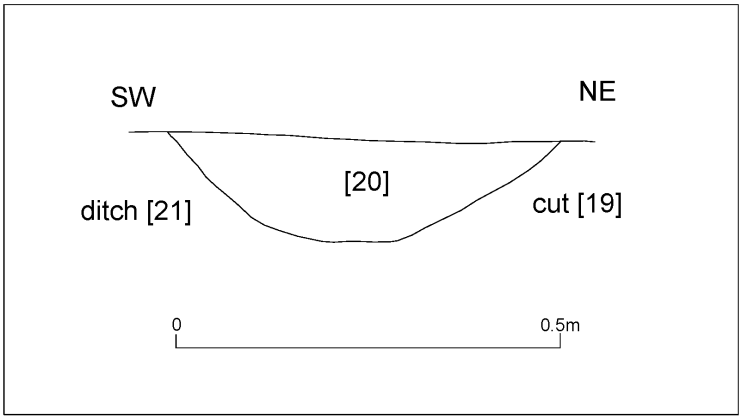

Figure 17: Ditch [19], Trench 11

Trench 12 (Figure 18 - 20)

A single truncated ditch, [26], identified at the western end of Trench 12 likely represented a continuation of the same feature identified to the south in Trench 11. Neither of its two sandy silt fills produced any finds.

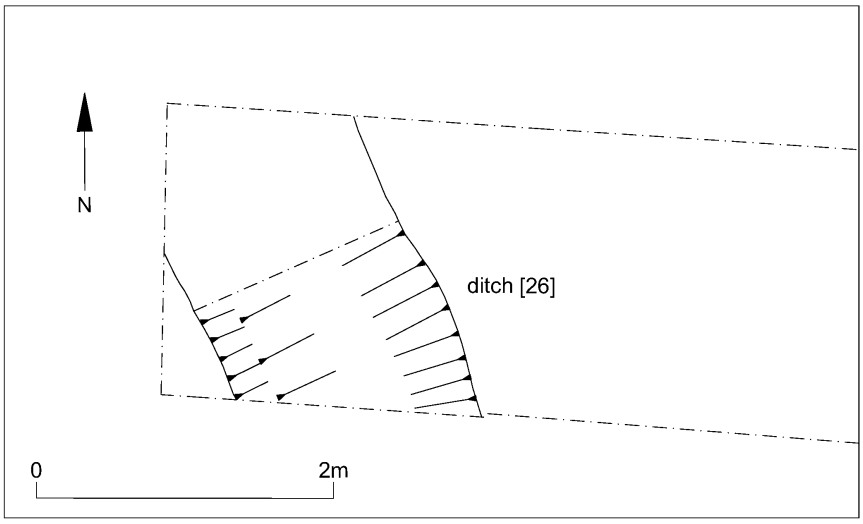

Figure 18: Ditch [26], Trench 12

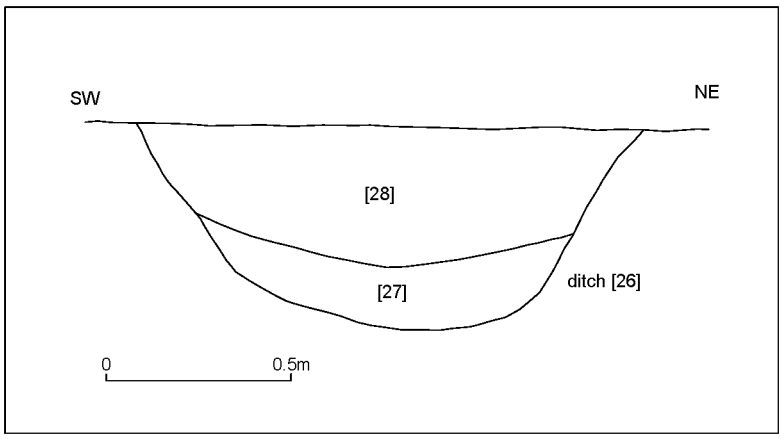

Figure 19: Ditch [26], Trench 12

Figure 20|: Trench 12, ditch [26]; view looking north-west

Trench 13 (Figure 21- 26)

Trench 13 was positioned in order to target a possible archaeological feature(s) identified via cropmarks and geophysical survey, namely a substantial rectangular enclosure with an apsidal attachment [24/33] on its southern side. Excavation revealed that the latter consisted of or was defined by a 1.20m wide, 0.30m-0.55m deep ditch with an open, V-shaped profile. Fill [32] produced a single fragment of 'Swithland' roofing slate which, whilst this could be Roman in date, a date in the later medieval or early modern period up to the early 19th century is also possible.

The cutting of a short extension to the trench to the north established that the ditch curved north and joined a second, east-west ditch [22], in a D-shaped arrangement measuring *c.*10m wide externally. Ditch [22] was represented by a gradual sloping-sided, 0.55m deep cut to a flat base. The lack of differentiation between respective fills suggests that the two ditches formed a single feature, possibly a small (stock?) enclosure.

To the east, a possible associated gully or heavily truncated ditch, [35], (1.80m x 0.80m x 0.25m), was located heading for the approximate south-east corner of the rectangular possible enclosure from the south. The eastern end of the trench was occupied by a shallow (0.16m deep) depression, [31], measuring a minimum of 2.40m in length and filled with silty clay, sand and gravel. If the ditches are deemed to represent a possible (stock?) enclosure, it is possible that [31] formed a dew pond or similar watering hole for livestock.

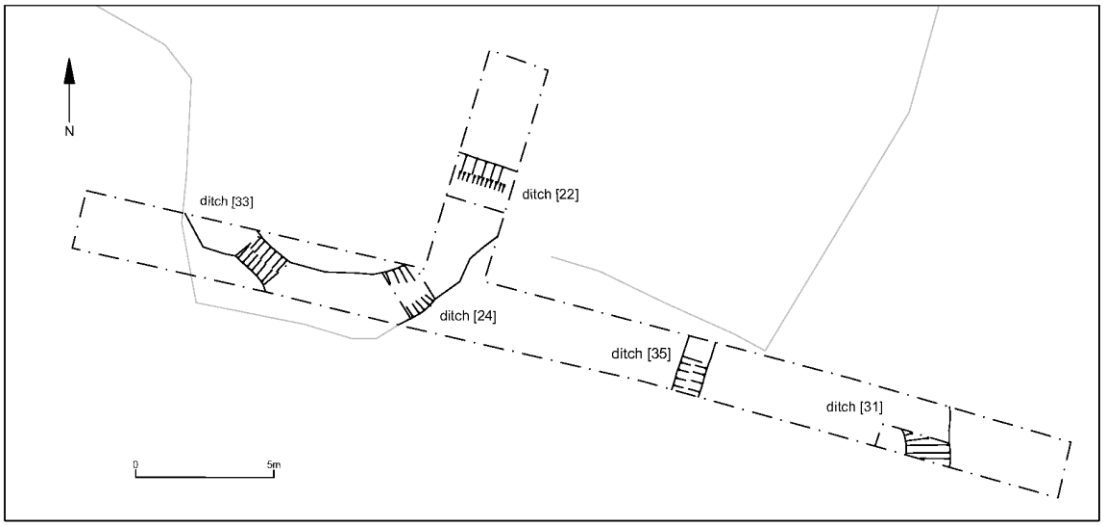

Figure 21: Trench 13; geophysical anomalies in grey

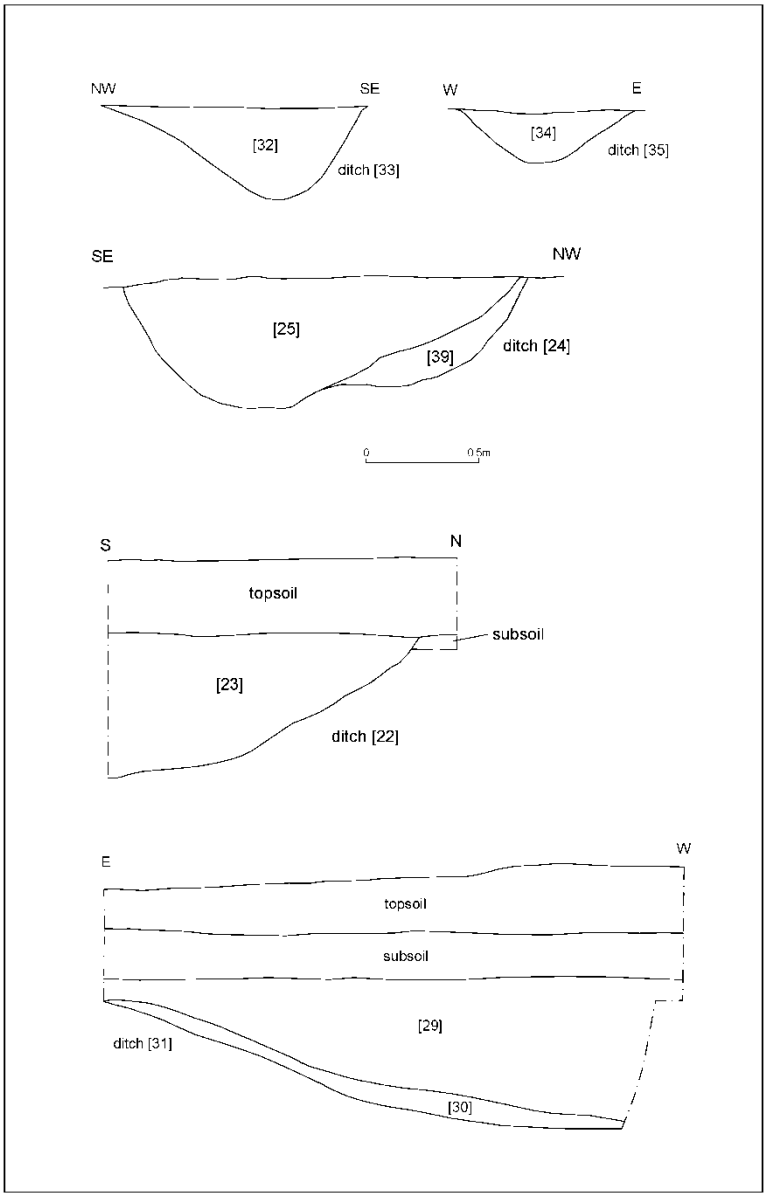

Figure 22: Trench 13 section drawings

Figure 23: Trench 13; ditches [22] & [24], view north; 1m scales

Figure 24: Trench 13, ditch [24]; view looking south-west; 1m scale

Figure 25: Trench 13, feature [22]: view looking north-west; 1m scale

Figure 26: Trench 13, feature [31]: view looking south, 1m scale

Trenches 14, 15, 16 & 17 occupied the northern and eastern areas of the site and were all archaeologically blank and, as with Trenches 6-9, were located on the marginal alluvial sands and gravels.

Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation at Soar Valley Way, Enderby, revealed evidence for general activity of late prehistoric and/or early Roman date. This is likely to be

agricultural activity which appeared to be concentrated in the western part of the site, with a possible concentration of Roman activity centred on the south-west corner. Archaeological features included a small rectangular stock enclosure associated with a possible pond or watering hole feature. A number of ditches identified in the vicinity may have been functionally linked to this arrangement, possibly as drove roads. The overall absence of cultural material and archaeo-botanical potential suggests that this activity was some distance from any associated settlement.

The absence of archaeological evidence in the eastern area is likely explained by a variation in the geology between the upslope, more permeable geology of sands and gravels (hence more suited to settlement observed to the west, and as such atypical of the locality) and the heavier, alluvial geology characterising the eastern part of the site.

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A15.2012), consisting of paper and photographic records, will be housed with Leicestershire County Council.

The archive consists of:

- 17 trench recording sheets
- 47 single context record sheets
- Context, drawing and photographic record indices
- 19 digital photographs
- 2 x 36 monochrome (film) photographs
- 9 x A2 drawing sheets
- A risk assessment form

Publication

A version of the excavation summary (see above) will appear in due course in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Acknowledgements

James Harvey and dr Roger Kipling of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of Everards Limited. The project was managed by Dr. Patrick Clay.

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Oasis Information

Project Name	Soar Valley Way, Enderby
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	James Harvey
Previous/Future work	Construction
Current Land Use	Agricultural
Development Type	Commercial
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-application
Site Co ordinates	NGR SP 554 998
Start/end dates of field work	February-March 2012
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	*c.*7.7 ha.

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Appendix 1: Roman Pottery and other Finds *Nicholas J. Cooper*

Roman Pottery

Two sherds of pottery of Roman date were recovered from two contexts. They have been identified according to the Leicestershire form and fabric series (Pollard 1994, 110-114) and quantified by sherd count and weight.

A single abraded sherd of Central Gaulish colour-coated ware (Fabric C12CG), weighing 1g, came from (2) [1]. The sherd still has some of the black slip-coating adhering and the internal groove below the plain rim indicates it probably comes from a hemispherical cup form (e.g. Symonds 1992, Fig. 7 Group 6). Such a form would be considered relatively unusual even in Leicester, so its occurrence here is a surprise. It dates from the mid-2nd to the mid-3rd century but, given its condition, is probably residual in this context.

The second sherd is an abraded, and undiagnositc, body sherd from a grey ware jar (Fabric GW5/6), weighing 4g, from (9) [3] dating between the 2nd and the 4th century.

Modern Pottery

A single sherd from the base of a shallow earthenware china dish or bowl, weighing 15g, came from (23) [22], a field drain. The white earthenware has a light blue glaze (Leics. Fabric EA10, Davies and Sawday 1999, 166) and dates to the 18th or 19th centuries.

Building Materials

A single fragment of ‘Swithland’ roofing slate weighing 10g, came from (32). Whilst this could be Roman in date, a date in the later medieval or early modern period up to the early 19th century is most likely.

References

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Appendix 2:Assessment of potential for environmental analysis *Anita Radini*

An evaluation was conducted by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services at Soar Valley Way, Enderby. In the absence of dating material from other features one 40 litre sample was taken from Ditch [03] (2) in trench 3, of possible Roman date, and brought to the ULAS laboratory where it was assessed for potential of environmental analysis. The sample appeared to be medium brown in colour and consisted of sandy clay and very small gravels. The sample was scanned for visible presence of charred plant remains (such as charcoal fragments and flecks), animal bone fragments, and any other biological remains such as insects or snails. It is possible to state that the scan was negative and that the sample has no potential for archaeobotanical analysis. Despite this assessment being negative, it needs to be taken in to account that both soil conditions and human activity can affect preservation across the same area. Therefore, an appropriate sampling strategy should be adopted if any future work should take place on site.

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