



Land at Ratby Lane, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire

Archaeological Excavation Report



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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Lanpro Services Ltd, on behalf of William Davis Ltd, to undertake an archaeological mitigation excavation in advance of a proposed residential development on land off Ratby Lane, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire, LE9 2BD (Fig. 1; NGR 452213 304883).

The 850 m² excavation site contained a total of eleven archaeological features: a parallel pair of ditches and nine pits/postholes. Most of the latter appeared to form the circumference of an 11 m-diameter circle. What this originally represented is unproven; possible interpretations include a roundhouse, although this is tentative. Only three artefacts were recovered (two potsherds – one Romano-British and one medieval – and a Roman copper coin); none were found in excavated features, whose environmental remains were generally sparse and poorly preserved. The features were sealed beneath an extensive deposit of brown/grey silty sand, thought to represent a buried ploughsoil associated with the former ridge and furrow cultivation evident across the site. The historical ploughing activity is likely to have truncated the earlier features and would account for their lack of depth.

Due to the nature of the remains, especially the lack of clarity over their interpretation and dating, no analysis stage is recommended for the archive arising from the excavation. A note within the annual 'Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland' round-up section in a forthcoming edition of the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* will be prepared by Wessex Archaeology.

Leicestershire County Museum Service has agreed in principle to accept the physical archive resulting from the excavation on completion of the project, under an accession code to be confirmed. Deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full written agreement of the landowner. Given the very limited results of the fieldwork, it is recommended that deposition of the digital archive will involve the uploading of the site report via OASIS only.

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Ratby Lane, Kirby Muxloe

Archaeological Excavation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project and planning background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Lanpro Services Ltd., on behalf of William Davis Ltd, to undertake archaeological mitigation works comprising a strip, map, record and sample excavation on land at Ratby Lane, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire, LE9 2BD (**Fig. 1**). The overall development area comprises 1.6 ha, of which 0.09 ha was subject to strip, map, record and sample excavation.

1.1.2 Planning permission (application ref. 19/0751/FUL) is being sought for residential development of the land and, following consultation with the Historic and Natural Environment Team at Leicestershire County Council (who act as archaeological advisors to Blaby District Council), it is expected that the grant of consent will be subject to the fulfilment of a number of planning conditions, including the provision of a programme of archaeological works.

1.1.3 The excavation was the final stage in a programme of archaeological works, which had included a desk-based assessment (CgMs 2013), geophysical survey (MOLA 2013) and trial trench evaluation (ASWYAS 2019) as detailed in the written scheme of investigation ('WSI': Lanpro Services 2020). The evaluation identified an area around trench 7 likely to contain prehistoric and Romano-British archaeological remains (**Fig. 1**).

1.1.4 The excavation was undertaken in accordance with the WSI, which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed, for both the fieldwork and the post-excavation work (Lanpro Services Ltd 2020). The Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council approved the WSI, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), prior to fieldwork commencing. The excavation was undertaken 27 July–5 August 2020.

1.2 Scope of the report

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the watching brief, to interpret the results within their local or regional context (or otherwise), and to assess their potential to address the aims outlined in the WSI, thereby making available information about the archaeological resource (a preservation by record).

1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The overall development area is located on the northern edge of Kirby Muxloe and comprises 1.6 ha of land centred at NGR 452213 304883 (**Fig. 1**). It is bounded by Ratby Lane to the east, Desford Road to the south, a residential property to the west, and farmland to the north.

1.3.2 The overall development area is located to the north of the crest of a north-east to south-west orientated ridge and slopes down moderately to the north towards the Rothley Brook, which flows north-eastwards to its confluence with the River Soar.



- 1.3.3 The area examined by the strip, map, record and sample excavation (hereafter 'the site') occupied a rectangular area close to the southern corner of the overall development area. The south-eastern edge of the site lay at 83 m OD, and the ground surface descended towards the Rothley Brook, with the north-western edge of the site lying at 79.5 m OD.
- 1.3.4 The underlying geology is mapped as Gunthorpe Member mudstone. The superficial deposits are recorded as glacio-fluvial deposits of sand and gravel (British Geological Survey online viewer 2020).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The following section summarises the results of the desk-based assessment (CgMs 2013), geophysical survey (MOLA 2013) and trial trench evaluation (ASWYAS 2019) as detailed in the WSI (Lanpro Services 2020).

2.2 Previous works related to the development

Geophysical survey (MOLA 2013)

- 2.2.1 Besides ridge and furrow detected across the entire survey area, no archaeological features of note were identified. The only other anomalies found were a pair of pipes following an east–west alignment.

Trial trench evaluation (ASWYAS 2019)

- 2.2.2 Eight archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated across the overall development area in 2019. Of these, trench 7 contained the most noteworthy finds, in the form of several features interpreted as Romano-British extraction pits. Six Iron Age pot sherds were also recovered. Although these latter finds were most likely residual given the greater proportion of Roman pottery, their presence did suggest the area had been in use for an extended period of time.
- 2.2.3 Besides the pits, the ridge and furrow identified in the geophysical survey appeared in several of the trenches. A depression along the north-east boundary of the overall development area was shown to correspond to an underlying ditch or hollow-way. Based on its alignment, the ditch or hollow-way is likely either a precursor to the current Ratby Lane or a roadside ditch associated with it. Pottery recovered from the fill of the ditch provided a post-medieval date for the feature.

2.3 Archaeological and historical context

Prehistoric to Romano-British (to AD 410)

- 2.3.1 The desk-based assessment identified a strong potential for prehistoric and Roman remains in the mitigation area.
- 2.3.2 The extraction pits found in trench 7 of the 2019 evaluation contained multiple pieces of Romano-British pottery. They appeared in much greater proportion than the residual Iron Age pottery recovered, suggesting the origins of the feature were most likely Roman.

Saxon to medieval (AD 410–AD 1540)

- 2.3.3 The desk-based assessment found a low potential in the area for Saxon and medieval finds.



Post-medieval (AD 1540 -)

- 2.3.4 Finds in the underlying ditch located along the north-east boundary of the site were identified as post-medieval.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Aims

- 3.1.1 The general aims of the excavation, as stated in the WSI (Lanpro Services 2020) and in compliance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (ClfA 2014a), were to:

- To establish the spatial extent, date, character, condition and significance of the archaeological activity in the proposed investigation areas highlighted on **Fig. 1**;
- To recover information relating to the nature and function of past human activity represented by the surviving archaeological remains;
- Excavate and record identified archaeological features and deposits to a level appropriate to their extent and significance;
- Assess the potential for survival of environmental evidence;
- To interpret the nature of human activity at the site and to place the site within its local, regional and national context as appropriate;
- Assess the site formation processes and the effects that these may have had on the survival and integrity of the archaeological features and deposits;
- Undertake sufficient post-excavation assessment to confidently interpret identified archaeological features;
- Undertake sufficient post-excavation assessment and analysis of artefacts and environmental samples to interpret their significance;
- Report and publish the results of the excavation and post-excavation analysis and place them within their local and regional context; and,
- Compile and deposit a site archive at a suitable repository and to provide information for the local HER to ensure the long-term survival of the excavated data.

3.2 Research objectives

- 3.2.1 The WSI stated that the programme of archaeological investigation had the potential to contribute to research priorities identified in East Midlands Historic Environment Research Framework, covering the Iron Age to Roman periods. Of particular relevance were questions regarding Roman rural settlement patterns (Knight et al. 2012).



4 METHODS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methods set out within the WSI (Lanpro Services 2020) and in general compliance with the standards outlined in ClfA guidance (ClfA 2014a). The methods employed are summarised below.

4.1.2 The site was focused around trench 7 of the evaluation (**Fig. 1**). The WSI proposed a core area measuring 1490 m², with two potential contingency areas to its east and north, occupying up to 970 m². In the event, and with the approval of the Senior Planning Archaeologist, the site occupied 826 m², as the presence of services along the western edge of the overall development area meant the site's limits had to be reduced. A contingency area (25m²) was also excavated at the north-eastern edge of the site, but this proved to be archaeologically blank.

4.2 Fieldwork methods

General

4.2.1 The excavation area was set out using a Leica Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) connected to Leica's SmartNet service, in broadly the same position as that proposed in the WSI (**Fig.1**), although as stated above, it was smaller than proposed in the WSI. The topsoil/overburden was removed in level spits using a 360° excavator equipped with a toothless bucket, under the constant supervision and instruction of the monitoring archaeologist. Machine excavation proceeded in level spits until the archaeological horizon was exposed.

4.2.2 Where necessary, the surfaces of archaeological deposits were cleaned by hand. A sample of archaeological features and deposits was hand-excavated, sufficient to address the aims of the excavation.

4.2.3 Spoil derived from machine stripping and hand-excavated archaeological features was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. A metal detector was also used. Artefacts were collected and bagged by context. All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained.

Recording

4.2.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. A complete record of excavated features and deposits was made, including plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections) and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid.

4.2.5 The Leica GNSS surveyed the location of archaeological features. All survey data is recorded in OS National Grid coordinates and heights above OD (Newlyn), as defined by OSTN15 and OSGM15, with a three-dimensional accuracy of at least 50 mm.

4.2.6 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 16 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4.3 Finds and environmental strategies

General

- 4.3.1 Strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of finds and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (Lanpro Services 2020). The treatment of artefacts and environmental remains was in general accordance with: *Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b) and *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011).

4.4 Monitoring

- 4.4.1 The Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council monitored the works on behalf of the LPA. Any variations to the WSI, if required to better address the project aims, were agreed in advance with the client and the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council.

5 STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

5.1 Introduction

Summary of archaeological features and deposits

- 5.1.1 The site contained a total of eleven archaeological features. These consisted of a parallel pair of ditches and nine pit-like features, most of which appeared to form the circumference of an 11 m-diameter circle. No finds were recovered from the excavated features. The environmental remains were generally sparse and poorly preserved. The excavated features were sealed beneath an extensive deposit of brown/grey silty sand, thought to represent a buried ploughsoil associated with the former ridge and furrow cultivation evident across the site and overall development area. The historical ploughing activity is likely to have truncated the earlier features and would account for their lack of depth.
- 5.1.2 Plans of all features are shown on **Fig. 1** and a full list of context numbers and context descriptions is contained in **Appendix 1 (Table 3)**.

Methods of stratigraphic assessment and quantity of data

- 5.1.3 All hand written and drawn records from the excavation have been collated, checked for consistency and stratigraphic relationships. Key data has been transcribed into a database, which can be updated during any further analysis. No phasing of archaeological features and deposits was possible given the nature of the remains.

5.2 Soil sequence and natural deposits

- 5.2.1 The natural geological substrate (003) comprised a mid-orange–pink silty sand with occasional streaks of pale grey sand and rare (3%) sub-rounded pebbles; it was encountered at a maximum depth of 0.95 m below ground level
- 5.2.2 It was overlain by a 0.37 m thick layer of mid-brownish grey silty sand (004), with some patches of light grey silty sand noted, mainly at the downslope (north-western) part of the site. This layer contained more coarse components than the other general deposits, with infrequent (20%) sub-rounded pebbles, less than 60 mm across. This material is thought to be a former ploughsoil associated with the ridge and furrow cultivation noted blanketing the site in the geophysical survey (MOLA 2013) and visible as earthworks.
- 5.2.3 Layer 004 was sealed by a mid-greyish brown silty sand subsoil (002), which was up to 0.28 m thick. The subsoil was in turn sealed by a shallow (0.20 m at thickest, but 0.14 m on

average) dark grey-brown silty sand topsoil. The site contained pasture at the time of excavation.

5.3 Uncertain date

5.3.1 None of the features contained any finds and their chronology is uncertain (**Fig. 1**).

5.3.2 The north-western part of the site contained a circular arrangement of seven pits, which are tabulated below.

Table 1 Summary of pits

Feature	Shape in plan	Profile	Dims (L. x W. x D.) (m)	Fill	Fig./Pl. ref.	Comments
011	Oval	Shallow, dish-shaped	1.55 x 0.98 x 0.19	012: reddish/yellowish brown silty sand	-	-
013	Oval	Shallow, dish-shaped	2.1 x 1.2 x 0.15	014: varied yellow to dark brown silty sand	-	-
019	Oval	Shallow, dish-shaped	1.60 x 1.03 x 0.23	020: reddish/yellowish silty sand	Pl. 1	Contained remains of wheat
021	Subcircular	Concave, bowl-shaped	0.98 x 0.86 x 0.32	022: varied dark grey to mid brown silty sand overlain by 023: yellowish grey silty sand	Fig. 2B; Pl. 2	Contained poss post-packing stones (at least one heat-affected), plus remains of wheat and barley
024	Lozenge	Shallow, dish-shaped	2.57 x 1.03 x 0.15	025: brownish/yellowish grey silty sand	Fig. 2c; Pl. 3	Cut by 026
026	Lozenge	Concave, bowl-shaped	1.1 x 0.93 x 0.22	027: greyish brown silty sand	Fig. 2c; Pl. 3	Cut 024
028	Oval	Shallow, dish-shaped	1.8 x 0.43 x 0.23	029: yellowish grey silty sand		Contained remains of wheat

5.3.3 A parallel pair of ditches, set some 15 m apart crossed the full width of the site on a north-east to south-west alignment. The northernmost (007=015; 0.90 x 0.26 m) contained a yellowish grey silty clay fill and appeared to form the recut of a slighter, paler feature (017: 0.6 x 0.1 m; **Fig. 2A, Pl. 5**). The paler feature (017) may have been an earlier ditch, although it was only apparent in one of the two interventions dug across the boundary.

- 5.3.4 The other intervention across ditch 007=015 recorded it containing a pale grey silty clay fill and cutting a pit with a dark brownish grey silty sand fill (009: 1.38 x 0.75+ x 0.12 m; **Fig. 2D**; **Pl. 4**). An environmental sample from slot 007 contained remains of wheat and charred hazelnut shell fragments.
- 5.3.5 The southernmost ditch on the site (030=032) was 2.28 by 0.32 m at its widest and deepest (**Plate 6**; **Figure 2E**), although it became shallower in its north-eastern portion. Ditch 030=032 was filled with a dark greyish-brown silty clay.
- 5.3.6 Finally, just to the south-east of ditch 030=032 was a subcircular pit (005 1.20 x 0.96 x 0.08 m) that contained a dark greyish-brown silty clay similar to that in the nearby ditch 030=032.

6 FINDS EVIDENCE

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The mitigation phase produced a very small quantity of finds, comprising two sherds of pottery and a copper alloy coin; one sherd and the coin came from the former ploughsoil (layer 004), while the second sherd was found unstratified. These few finds augment a small assemblage of finds recovered during the evaluation (ASWYAS 2019). Quantities for both stages are summarised in **Table 2**.

Table 2 Summary of finds quantities for evaluation and mitigation

	Animal Bone	CBM	Pottery	Other finds
EVALUATION	119 frags	9 frags	54 sherds RB 11 sherds post-med	9 worked flint 1 iron nail 1 cinder
MITIGATION				
Context 004			1 sherd C14th/15th	1 coin
Unstratified			1 sherd RB	

6.2 Pottery

- 6.2.1 The unstratified sherd is a grog-tempered ware of Romano-British date (Leicester Pottery fabric group GT). This is an undiagnostic body sherd, heavily abraded.
- 6.2.2 The second sherd, from former ploughsoil 004, is a hard-fired oxidised sandy ware of probable late medieval date (14th/15th century; Leicestershire fabric code MS). This is a base sherd, but is of uncertain vessel form.

6.3 Coin

- 6.3.1 The coin is corroded and worn but can be identified as a Romano-British copper alloy issue, probably of 2nd or 3rd-century date.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 Four bulk sediment samples were taken from three pits and a ditch of uncertain chronology, possibly prehistoric/Romano-British, and were processed for the recovery and assessment of the environmental evidence.

7.2 Aims and methods

- 7.2.1 The purpose of this assessment was to determine the potential of the environmental remains preserved at the site to address project aims and to provide data valuable for wider research frameworks. The nature of this assessment follows recommendations set up by Historic England (Campbell et al. 2011).
- 7.2.2 The size of the bulk sediment samples varied between 20 and 35 litres, and on average was around 27 litres. The samples were processed by standard flotation methods on a Siraf-type flotation tank; the flot retained on a 0.25 mm mesh, residues fractionated into 4 mm and 1 mm fractions. The coarse fractions (>4 mm) were sorted by eye and discarded. The environmental material extracted from the residues was added to the flots. The fine residue fractions and the flots were scanned using a stereo incident light microscopy (Leica MS5 microscope) at magnifications of up to x40 for the identification of environmental remains. Different bioturbation indicators were considered, including the percentage of roots, the abundance of modern seeds and the presence of mycorrhizal fungi sclerotia (e.g. *Cenococcum geophilum*) and animal remains, such as burrowing snails, or earthworm eggs and insects, which would not be preserved unless anoxic conditions prevailed on site. The preservation and nature of the charred plant and wood charcoal remains, as well as the presence of other environmental remains such as terrestrial and aquatic molluscs and animal bone was recorded. Preliminary identifications of dominant or important taxa are noted below, following the nomenclature of Stace (1997) for wild plants, and traditional nomenclature, as provided by Zohary and Hopf (2000), for cereals. Abundance of remains is qualitatively quantified (A*** = exceptional, A** = 100+, A* = 30-99, A = >10, B = 9-5, C = <5) as an estimation of the minimum number of individuals and not the number of remains per taxa.

7.3 Results

- 7.3.1 The flots from the bulk sediment samples were generally small (**Table 4, Appendix 2**), with moderate numbers of roots and modern seeds that may be indicative of some stratigraphic movement and the possibility of contamination by later intrusive elements. Environmental evidence was sparse and comprised of plant remains mainly poorly preserved by carbonisation, and small amounts of iron coated, mature wood charcoal. Cereal remains dominated the charred assemblages, these included *Triticum* sp. (wheat, including tentatively identified grains of *T. cf. spelta* (spelt) and *T. cf. aestivum/turgidum* (naked wheat)), *Hordeum vulgare* (barley) and grains and a culm node of Triticeae (unidentified cereals). Also present were seeds of Viciaeae (vetches) and Poaceae (grasses, including *Avena* sp. (oats)), and *Corylus avellana* (hazel) nut shell fragments.

7.4 Discussion

- 7.4.1 The environmental evidence retrieved, consisting of wood charcoal and non-woody charred plant remains, suggests some processing activities of domestic and wild resources took place on site. The wood charcoal, being iron coated, suggests intermittent wet and dry deposits, detrimental to the preservation of organic evidence. The overall sparsity of remains in the sampled deposits suggest the remains could be residual, although preservation could also be an issue.
- 7.4.2 The chronology of these processing activities is uncertain, due to the absence of diagnostic artefactual and environmental evidence.



8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Summary

8.1.1 The strip, map, record and sample excavation exposed undated pits and ditches. Most of the pits appear to form a circle in plan. What this originally represented is unproven; possible interpretations include a roundhouse, although this is tentative. The ditches may relate to a later phase of activity than the pit circle; certainly, one of the ditches and the pit circle could not have been contemporary due to their superimposition in plan.

8.1.2 The results of the earlier evaluation and finds of Roman material (coin and potsherd) from the mitigation exercise attest to activity on the site in the Iron Age and Romano-British period. The date of the excavated features is uncertain although they appear to have been sealed by the ridge and furrow recorded across the site, and it would not be unreasonable to suggest they may relate to activity on the site in the prehistoric–Romano-British periods.

8.2 Discussion

Pits

8.2.1 The pits appeared to describe a circle in plan, open to the north-east and of approximate 11.5 m diameter. The long axis of the pits tended to follow the circumference of the proposed circle. On the basis of these characteristics (aspect/orientation and overall size and form in plan) it is possible that the pits marked the former site of a roundhouse.

8.2.2 Although roundhouses in the East Midlands tend to be defined by penannular gullies representing drip gullies or wall slots, post-built examples are well-documented, for example at Beaumont Leys, which lies 8 km to the north-east of the present site (Thomas 2011, fig. 9).

8.2.3 The generally gentle profiles of these features (**Table 2**) would militate against them having a structural function: in section they did not resemble the narrow, deep sockets expected of postholes; in addition, their fills displayed a variety of hues and textures, suggesting they became infilled at different times. On balance therefore, the function of these features has not been established with confidence.

8.2.4 It is uncertain whether pit 009 (the pit cut by the northernmost ditch, 007=015) formed part of the proposed circle. It lay a little askew of the circuit and its dark brownish grey silty sand differed somewhat from that in the rest of the pits – although their fills were far from uniform.

8.2.5 Whatever the attribution of pit 009, it is clear that the boundary and the pit circle are superimposed and belong to different phases of activity. Should pit 009 have been part of the circle then it would follow that the boundary definition marked by the ditches belongs to a later phase.

Ditches

8.2.6 The two ditches may have defined a track or a double-ditched boundary, which perhaps once contained a central bank/hedge. That no trace of the latter was apparent may be due to the horizontal truncation that has – to judge by the shallow depth of the remaining features and the evidence of ridge and furrow across the excavation area – affected the archaeological horizon.

- 8.2.7 The ditches do not cut across the slope on which the site lies, but follow its contours. They are also parallel to the existing course of Desford Road, although given that road follows a ridge and is therefore presumably a long-established routeway, this shared alignment does not help resolve the chronology of the ditches. More telling is the fact that the ditches run at 90 degrees to the ridge and furrow clearly visible on Google Earth mapping across the overall development area and the fact the ditches were not detected by the geophysical survey. Therefore, with no obvious evidence of the ditches cutting the ridge and furrow earthworks it would follow that they (the ditches) were sealed by them and so pre-date the post-medieval period at least, and may even be pre-medieval in inception. Certainly, the parallel ditches do not correspond with any boundaries shown on the 1886 25 inch Ordnance Survey map, or any later editions, indicating they have never been a part of the modern landscape.
- 8.2.8 The absolute chronology of the ditches is uncertain, as is their relative dating. Their parallel alignment might suggest that they were contemporary with each other, although the difference in their fills may suggest they became backfilled at different periods.

Comparison with results of the evaluation

- 8.2.9 The site targeted the location of evaluation trench 7, which had exposed a series of large (up to 8 m wide by 0.8 m deep) cut features interpreted as extraction pits and found to contain flint, CBM and Iron Age and Romano-British pottery in their grey or brown silty sand fills (ASWYAS 2019). The lack of correlation between the results of the evaluation and the strip, map, record and sample excavation (**Fig. 3**) merits some comment. No deposit commensurate with layer 004, the former ploughsoil associated with the ridge and furrow cultivation, was noted in the evaluation. It seems likely that the 'fills' of the features identified by the evaluation and layer 004, described above, represent the same material; certainly, the context descriptions and the depths below ground level at which they were encountered are comparable. Two of the evaluation pits correspond with the positions of the ditches revealed during the mitigation, and so would account for the apparent depth of the 'pits', perhaps with the former ploughsoil slumping into the earlier ditches: the bases of the 'pits' and the bases of the ditches appear to lie at a similar depth below ground level. It has been established that the site hosted activity in the Iron Age and Romano-British periods; the remains of this were truncated by later cultivation, which accounts for the presence of the material recovered during the evaluation from the medieval/post-medieval ploughsoil. No evidence of evaluation ditch 710 was apparent in the mitigation excavation, although it shared the same north-east to south-west alignment of those that were recorded.

8.3 Conclusions

- 8.3.1 The project was reasonably successful in achieving its aims and objectives, within the limits imposed by the nature of the surviving remains.
- 8.3.2 The spatial extent of the site's archaeological component has been established and it has been possible to elaborate on the understanding of the site afforded by the results of the evaluation, although a lack of artefacts means that the dates of the excavated features has not been proven. With the site overlain by ridge and furrow, and the features being generally only very shallow, it has been established that the state of preservation of archaeological remains on the site is poor.
- 8.3.3 Should the tentative identification of the existence of a former roundhouse be correct, then it would follow that the site was occupied in the past. Cereal cultivation (pre-ridge and furrow), exploitation of wild food resources (burnt hazelnut shells) and boundary definition



can be more confidently attested, although in light of the evidence it is not possible to elaborate further.

8.3.4 The environmental assessment recorded only sparse numbers of remains and noted conditions detrimental to the preservation of organic evidence; therefore, the project established the site presents only low potential for the survival of useful environmental evidence.

8.3.5 The identified archaeological features and deposits have been excavated and recorded to a level appropriate to their extent and significance. The finds and environmental assessments contained in this report are sufficient to interpret their significance.

8.4 Recommendations

8.4.1 Due to the nature of the uncovered remains, especially the lack of clarity over their interpretation and dating, they offer very little potential to usefully contribute to any published research objectives (Knight et al. 2012).

8.4.2 Therefore no analysis stage is recommended for the archive. It is recommended that publication takes the form of a note within the annual 'Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland' round-up section in a forthcoming edition of the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*. This will be prepared by Wessex Archaeology.

9 STORAGE AND CURATION

9.1 Museum

9.1.1 The archive resulting from the excavation is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield. Leicestershire County Museum Service has agreed in principle to accept the archive on completion of the project, under an accession code to be confirmed. Deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full written agreement of the landowner to transfer title of all finds to the museum.

9.2 Preparation of the archive

9.2.1 The archive, which includes paper records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Leicestershire County Museum Service, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

9.2.2 All archive elements are marked with the **site/accession code**, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive comprises the following:

- 1 cardboard box of artefacts, ordered by material type; and
- 1 file of paper records and A3/A4 graphics.

Digital archive

9.2.3 The digital archive generated by the project comprises born-digital data (eg site records, survey data, databases and spreadsheets, photographs and reports). Selected digital data (see below) will be deposited with a Trusted Digital Repository, in this instance the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), to ensure its long-term curation. Digital data will be prepared following ADS guidelines (ADS 2013 and online guidance) and accompanied by full metadata.

9.3 Selection strategy

9.3.1 It is widely accepted that not all the records and materials (artefacts and ecofacts) collected or created during the course of an archaeological project require preservation in perpetuity. These records and materials will be subject to selection in order to establish what will be retained for long-term curation, with the aim of ensuring that all elements selected to be retained are appropriate to establish the significance of the project and support future research, outreach, engagement, display and learning activities, ie, the retained archive should fulfil the requirements of both future researchers and the receiving Museum.

9.3.2 The selection strategy, which details the project-specific selection process, is underpinned by national guidelines on selection and retention (Brown 2011, section 4) and generic selection policies (SMA 1993) and follows ClfA's 'Toolkit for Selecting Archaeological Archives'. It should be agreed by all stakeholders (Wessex Archaeology's internal specialists, external specialists, local authority, museum) and fully documented in the project archive.

9.3.3 In this instance, no Selection Strategy has been made available for the evaluation archive. The proposals made here, by Wessex Archaeology's internal specialists, are therefore stand-alone, but are made against the background of the information presented in the evaluation report (ASWYAS 2019). The following project-specific proposals for selection are proposed:

Finds

9.3.4 This is a very small assemblage, with little or no archaeological significance or further research potential. The recommendation is not to retain any of the finds.

Documentary records

9.3.5 The site was largely digitally recorded, and paper records are therefore limited to site registers. Scanned copies of these will form part of the digital archive. They will be offered to the Museum, together with hard copies of all reports and print-outs of any digital data requested.

Digital data

9.3.6 Given the very limited results of the fieldwork, it is recommended that only selected digital data are deposited with ADS, an approach commensurate with the scale and significance of the project. Deposition will involve the uploading of the site report via OASIS only.

9.4 Security copy

9.4.1 In line with current best practice (eg, Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

10 OASIS

10.1.1 An OASIS (online access to the index of archaeological investigations) record (<http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main>) has been initiated, with key fields completed (Appendix 3). A .pdf version of the final report will be submitted following approval by the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council on behalf of the LPA. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be



integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) ArchSearch catalogue.

11 COPYRIGHT

11.1 Archive and report copyright

11.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. The museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*. In some instances, certain regional museums may require absolute transfer of copyright, rather than a licence; this should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

11.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

11.2 Third party data copyright

11.2.1 This document and the project archive may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (eg, Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which Wessex Archaeology are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferable by Wessex Archaeology. Users remain bound by the conditions of the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of such material



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Appendix 1: Context data

Table 3 Context register

Fill number	Fill interpretation	Fill description	In cut	Cut interpretation	Cut description
001	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey silty sand.			
002	Subsoil	Mid grey-brown silty sand.			
003	Natural	Mid orange-pink silty sand with light grey streaks.			
004	R+F plough soil	Mid brown-grey silty sand with patches of lighter grey.			
006	Secondary fill	Dark yellow-brown silty sand.	005	Pit	Sub-circular pit of unknown function. Undated.
008	Secondary fill	Light white-grey silty clay. Same as fill 016	007	Ditch	Undated NE-SW running ditch. Leached fill means it may be prehistoric. Same as cut 015.
010	Secondary fill	Dark brown-grey silty sand.	009	Pit	Undated shallow pit cut by ditch 007.
012	Secondary fill	Dark yellow-brown silty sand.	011	Pit	Ovate pit of unknown function. Undated.
014	Secondary fill	Dark yellow brown silty sand.	013	Pit	Sub-oval pit of unknown function and undated.
016	Secondary fill	Light white-grey silty clay. Same as fill 008.	015	Ditch	Undated NE-SW running ditch. Leached fill means it may be prehistoric. Same as cut 007. Cuts ditch 017.
018	Secondary fill	Dark grey-brown silty sand.	017	Ditch	Undated ditch cut by ditch 015. Aligned NE-SW.
020	Secondary fill	Dark yellow-brown , with reddish brown and grey mottling.	019	Pit	Sub-oval pit of unknown function. Undated.
022	Secondary fill	Dark grey-brown silty sand. Large stones, possibly packing are present in the centre of the fill.	021	Pit/Posthole	Undated circular pit or posthole.
023	Secondary fill	Mid yellow-grey silty sand.	021	Pit/Posthole	Undated circular pit or posthole.
025	Secondary fill	Dark yellow-grey silty sand.	024	Pit	Undated sub-oval pit of unknown function.
027	Secondary fill	Mid brown-grey silty sand.	026	Pit	Undated sub-circular pit of unknown function.
029	Secondary fill	Mid yellow-grey silty sand.	028	Pit	Undated sub-oval pit of unknown function.
031	Secondary fill	Dark grey-brown silty clay. Same as fill 032.	030	Ditch	Undated boundary ditch aligned NE-SW. Same as cut 032.
033	Secondary fill	Dark grey-brown silty clay. Same as fill 031.	032	Ditch	Undated boundary ditch aligned NE-SW. Same as cut 030.



Appendix 2: Environmental Evidence

Table 4 Assessment of the environmental evidence/macrofossils/charred plant remains and charcoal

Feature	Context	Sample	Vol (l)	Flot (ml)	Bioturbation proxies	Grain	Chaff	Cereal notes	Charred other	Charred other notes	Charcoal > 2mm (ml) {= volume from flot+(volume from res*fraction)}	Charcoal	Other	Preservation
7	8	1	35	30	25%, A, E, I	A	C	<i>Triticum</i> sp. (inc. cf. <i>spelta</i>), Triticeae grain fragments and culm node	C	<i>Corylus avellana</i> , Poaceae (inc. <i>Avena</i> sp.), Viciae	6	Mature, iron coated	-	Poor
21	22	2	28	10	25%, B	B	-	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> , <i>Triticum</i> sp (inc. cf. <i>aestivum/turgidum</i>), Triticeae	C	Viciae	1.5	Mature, some iron coating	-	Heterogeneous
28	29	3	26	20	20%, B, E, I	B	-	<i>Triticum</i> sp., Triticeae	C	<i>Avena</i> sp.	3.5	Mature, iron coated	-	Poor
19	20	4	20	20	25%, A, E	A		<i>Triticum</i> sp., Triticeae	C	<i>Avena</i> sp., Viciae	2.5	Mature, iron coated	-	Heterogeneous some iron coating (grain poor, Viciae fair)

Key: Scale of abundance: A = 30–10, B = 9–5, C = <5; Bioturbation proxies: Roots (%), Uncharred seeds (scale of abundance), E = earthworm eggs, I = insects.



Appendix 3: OASIS record

OASIS ID: wessexar1-392455

Project details

Project name	Land at Ratby Lane, Kirby Muxloe
Short description of the project	<p>Wessex Archaeology carried out an archaeological mitigation excavation in advance of a proposed residential development on land off Ratby Lane, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire.</p> <p>The 850-square metre excavation site contained a total of eleven archaeological features: a parallel pair of ditches and nine pits/postholes. Most of the latter appeared to form the circumference of an 11 m-diameter circle, tentatively interpreted as a possible roundhouse. Only three artefacts were recovered (two potsherds – one Romano-British and one medieval – and a Roman copper coin); none were found in the excavated features, whose environmental remains were generally sparse and poorly preserved. The features were sealed beneath an extensive deposit of brown/grey silty sand, thought to represent a buried ploughsoil associated with the former ridge and furrow cultivation evident across the site. The historical ploughing activity is likely to have truncated the earlier features and would account for their lack of depth.</p> <p>Due to the nature of the uncovered remains, especially the lack of clarity over their interpretation and dating, no analysis stage is recommended for the archive.</p>
Project dates	Start: 27-04-2020 End: 06-08-2020
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	233540 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 4 - Regularly improved
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Monument type	PIT Uncertain
Significant Finds	COIN Roman
Investigation type	"Open-area excavation"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	LEICESTERSHIRE BLABY KIRBY MUXLOE Ratby Lane, Kirby Muxloe
Postcode	LE9 2BB
Study area	1.6 Hectares
Site coordinates	52213 4883 52213 00 00 N 4883 00 00 E Point



Height OD / Depth Min: 80m Max: 83m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	Lanpro Services Ltd
Project design originator	Lanpro Services Ltd
Project director/manager	John Winfer
Project supervisor	Luke Roberts
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	William Davis Ltd

Project archives

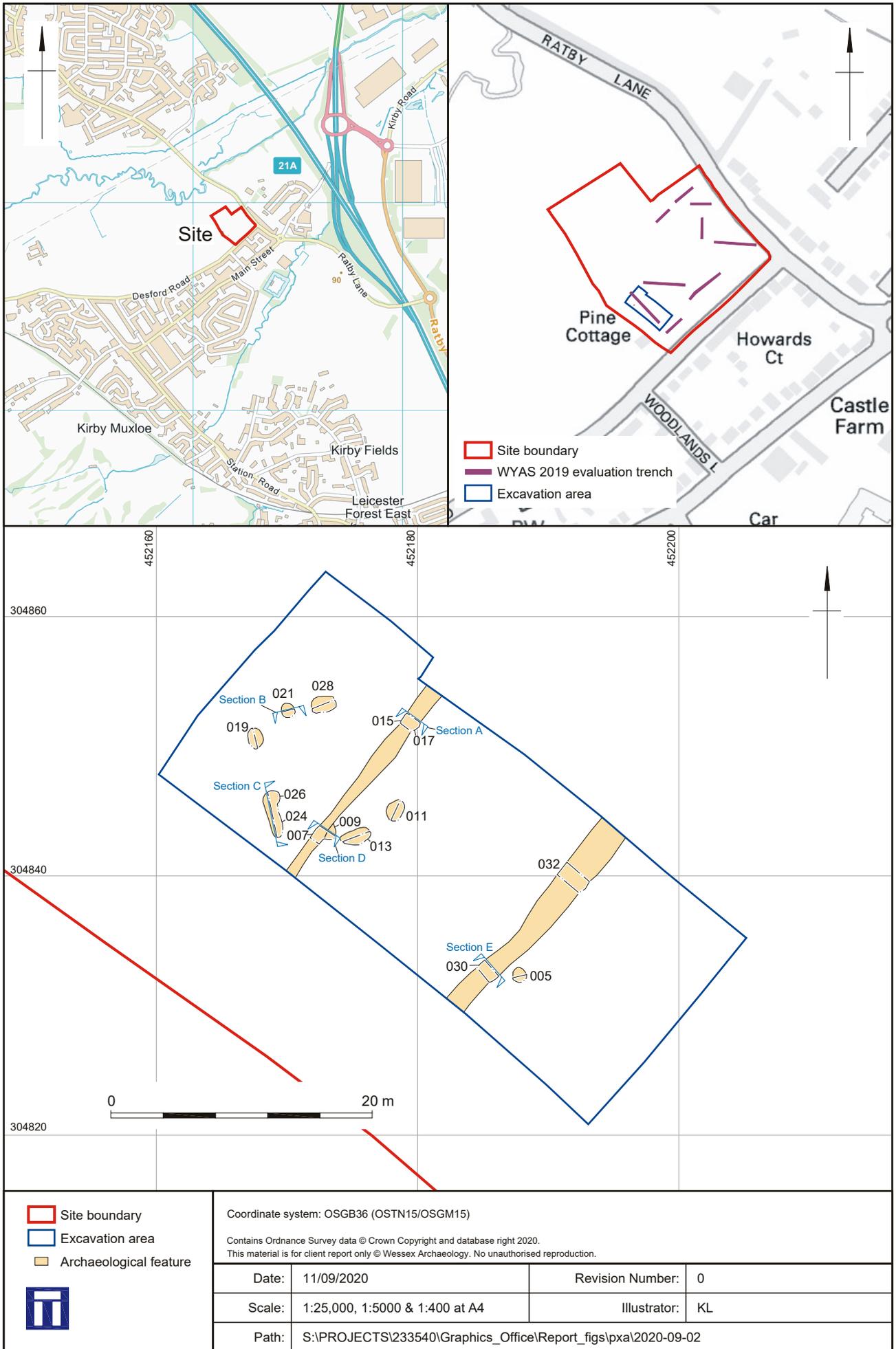
Physical Archive recipient	Leicestershire County Council Museums Service
Physical Archive ID	WA_233540
Physical Contents	"Metal"
Digital Archive recipient	ADS
Digital Archive ID	WA_233540
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Digital Media available	"Survey","Text","Database","Images raster / digital photography","Spreadsheets"
Paper Archive recipient	Leicestershire County Council Museums Service
Paper Archive ID	WA_233540
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Diary","Drawing","Report","Section","Survey "

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Ratby Lane, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire Archaeological Excavation Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Pinfold, A and Saunders, B
Other bibliographic details	233540.02

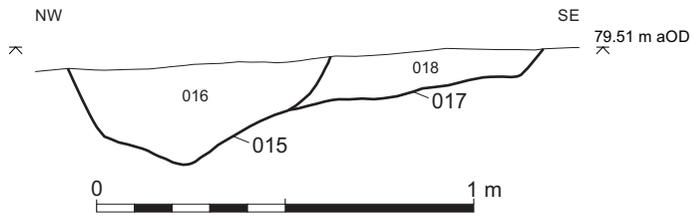


Date	2020
Issuer or publisher	Wessex Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Sheffield
Description	A4 printed report with plastic binder
Entered by	Ben Saunders (b.saunders@wessexarch.co.uk)
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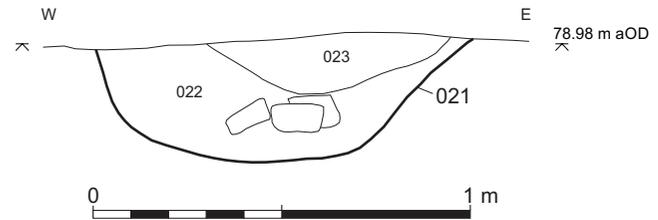


Site location and overview of results

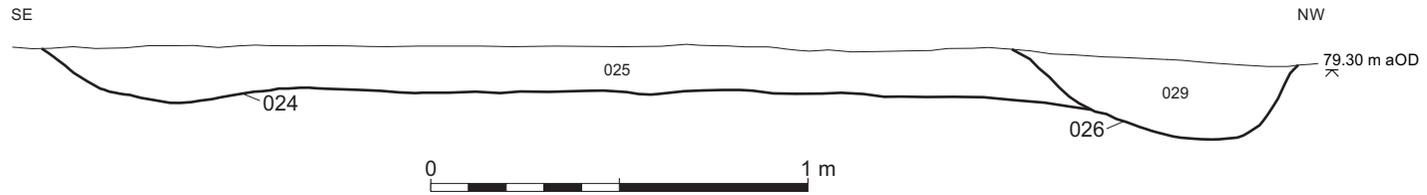
Figure 1



A: South-west facing section of ditch 015 and ditch 017



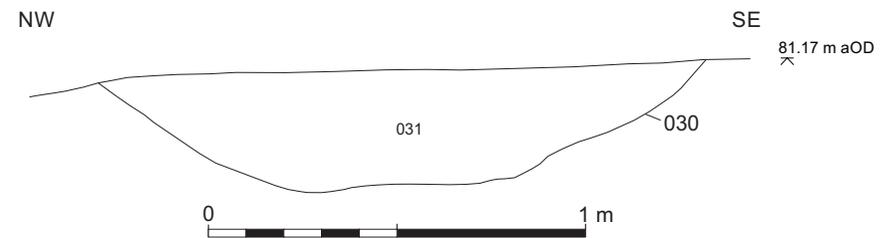
B: South facing section of pit/posthole 021



C: North-east facing section of pit 024 and pit 026



D: South-west facing section of ditch 007 and pit 009



E: South-west facing section of ditch 030



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- Site boundary
- Excavation area
- Archaeological feature
- WYAS trench
- WYAS archaeology

0

 10 m

	Coordinate system: OSGB36 (OSTN15/OSGM15)	
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Evaluation results overlain onto site plan

Figure 3



Plate 1: Pit 019 from the south-west



Plate 2: Pit 021 from the south

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Plate 3: Pits 024 and 026 from the north-east



Plate 4: Ditch 007 and pit 009 from the south-west

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Plate 5: Early ditch 0017 and recut ditch 015 from south-west



Plate 6: Ditch 030 from the south-west

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