ARCHEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
TRIAL TRENCHING

RINGSTEAD QUARRY
RAUNDS
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

PC372B

10th February 2012
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10th February 2012
Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd

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Non Technical Summary

During January 2012 Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd carried out an archaeological trench evaluation across the site of a proposed quarry to the south-east of Ringstead Grange Farm, Raunds, Northamptonshire (NGR TL 980 740). The work was carried out on behalf of Mick George Ltd and forms part of an archaeological evaluation required to assess the presence, extent, nature and survival of archaeological features within the application area.

A limited geophysical survey and trial trenching exercise was carried out across the site in 1990, as part of a previous application. Those works successfully identified a small Iron Age settlement to the east of Top Lodge. Prior to the current trenching exercise, a full geophysical survey had been carried out across the site, which further clarified the extent and morphology of the Iron Age settlement. It also identified occasional dispersed anomalies across other parts of the site. 44 trial trenches were excavated across the site in order to investigate the various geophysical anomalies, with a particular concentration in and around the area of the known Iron Age settlement. ‘Blank’ areas were also trenched in order to act as a control.

Archaeological features were identified in 14 trenches. The focus of archaeology was c. 350m to the east of the redundant farm buildings of Top Lodge (trenches 12, 13 and 15 - 22), being in and around the previously identified Iron Age settlement. The majority of the identified archaeology was to the immediate south of a large boundary ditch that traversed the site on an NW-SE alignment. This was identified in trenches 12, 13, 15, 16 and 19. A ditch identified in trench 5 may have been a continuation of this feature, although it remains undated. Evidence for probable settlement enclosures were identified in trenches 13, 15, 17, 18, 21 and 22. The geophysical survey suggested that these were sub-rectangular in shape, although a circular feature was identified in trench 17. Several pits and ditches were also investigated in and around the enclosure arrangement, which are probably related.

The pottery recovered from the excavated features suggests occupation during the early Iron Age period, with a possible abandonment in the middle Iron Age. Other artefacts recovered include animal bone, a single flint flake and some daub. The nature of the finds assemblage suggests a rural farming settlement characterised by rectangular and sub-circular enclosures, boundary ditches and probable hut circles.

Outside of this main zone of activity very little archaeology was encountered. This confirmed the picture provided by the geophysical survey. A possible ring ditch (early Bronze Age?) was identified in trench 1 and undated ditches in trenches 9 and 29, the latter which related to a possible rectangular enclosure identified on the geophysical survey.
Figure 1  Ringstead Quarry, Raunds, Northamptonshire : Site Location
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The commission

1.1.1 A planning application is being made for a proposed quarry on land to the south-east of Ringstead Grange, near Raunds, Northamptonshire. The application area covers c.65ha and is centred on NGR TL 980 740 (Figure 1). As part of the application process, an archaeological evaluation has been undertaken comprising an archaeo-geophysical survey and trial trenching. The results from these surveys form part of the application submission.

1.1.2 The evaluation was carried out in order to assess the extent, nature and survival of archaeological features across the site. The results will allow the archaeological adviser to the mineral planning authority to make their recommendation on the application. All works were conducted in full consultation with the Council Archaeological Office, in accordance with government guidance as set out in PPS5 (2010).

1.1.3 An earlier phase of geophysical survey and trial trenching was carried out across much of the site in 1990 for a previous planning application which did not proceed (Shaw & Blinkhorn 1992). The current submission has had a full archaeo-geophysical survey completed (Bartlett & Coates 2011) and a comprehensive trial trench investigation. The present document outlines the results of the trial trenching phase. The evaluation covered all land where the proposed development will create an impact through soil moving operations. Trenches were particularly targeted to the east of Top Lodge where an Iron Age settlement is known to exist.

1.1.4 The remit of the trial trenching programme was discussed in detail with the Council Archaeological Officer. Trial trenches were excavated within the footprint of the identified geophysical readings that suggested the presence of possible ditches, enclosures, hut circles and other linear and pit-like features. Additional trenches were placed across the site to test apparently ‘blank’ areas.

1.1.5 The works were carried out between the 3rd & 20th January 2012. Forty-four trenches were excavated (Figure 2), each trench measuring 40m long by 2m wide.
2.0 PHYSICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

2.1.1 The site is located to the south of Ringstead village, between the A45 and Ringstead Grange Farm, extending across five arable fields. These fields rise from c.50mOD to the SE of the farm, to an elevation of 64mOD within the central part of the site, before gently sloping down towards the A45.

2.2 Geology

2.2.1 The bedrock is limestone of various middle Jurassic formations, including Blisworth limestone towards the west of the site and Cornbrash which forms an area of higher ground in the centre. A Boulder Clay drift deposit is present in the north eastern part of the site.

Plate 2 Two trenches (24 & 38) showing the different geologies present on the site
3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

3.1 Aims and objectives

3.1.1 The general aim of the trench evaluation was to obtain useful information concerning the presence, character, date and level of preservation of surviving archaeological remains in those areas where buried archaeology is suspected. The trench evaluation would also allow the curatorial authority to determine the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource, and to discuss, in consultation with the developer’s archaeological advisers, the necessity for the preservation by record of identified archaeological remains. The trench evaluation provides the information required to allow the curatorial authority to make their recommendations on the determination of the application.

3.1.2 Following the geophysical survey, 44 trial trenches were excavated across the site, each measuring 40m long by 2.0m wide (see Figure 2). The position of the trenches was determined by the results of the non-intrusive geophysical survey. Trenches were also positioned to investigate apparently archaeological ‘blank’ areas.

3.2 Trench evaluation methodology

3.2.1 All archaeological operations were carried out in accordance with current FAME guidelines\(^1\) and Health and Safety legislation. A detailed Risk Assessment was carried out and circulated to all staff prior to work commencing.

3.2.2 All trenches were surveyed and located using GPS systems and levelling equipment. Overburden was removed from each trench in a clean and methodical manner and stored alongside. This was carried out under the supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist using a tracked excavator fitted with a 2.0m wide toothless ditching bucket. Where deep deposits were encountered, machine excavation was undertaken in stints to check for the presence of archaeology at various horizons.

3.2.3 Machine excavations took place to a level of either natural deposits or when potential archaeological horizons were encountered. All subsequent excavations were undertaken by hand. Sampling was designed to characterise and date features.

3.2.4 A detailed context record was maintained on individual pro-forma record cards. Each archaeological layer, fill, cut, etc., was individually

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\(^1\) Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers, formerly known as SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers)
numbered and described in terms of soil detail, stratigraphic position, dimensions, artefact content, samples and interpretation.

3.2.5 Trench plans and sections were drawn at scale 1:50 and 1:20 as necessary and located on a site plan. Excavated sections were drawn at scale 1:10. A full photographic record was made using slide, monochrome 35mm film and digital format.

3.2.6 All finds relating to the archaeological record of the site were collected with reference to context and location.

3.3 The archive

3.3.1 The written, drawn and photographic records form the site archive, which is currently stored at Phoenix Consulting’s Bedford office. All artefacts recovered (which comprises pottery sherds, a flint and fragments of animal bone) have been cleaned, marked and conserved, in accordance with best practice.

3.3.2 The archive has been organised using the standards set out in MAP 2 Appendix 3 (Management of Archaeological Projects – published by English Heritage – 1991).

3.3.3 The ultimate recipient museum for finds and the archive will be the recognised depository for the archaeological material for Northamptonshire and their Conditions of Acceptance will be adhered to.

4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Background to the site and surrounds

4.1.1 Mesolithic (c 8,500 to 3,500 BC) and Neolithic (3,500 to 2,000 BC) archaeology in the vicinity of the site is slight. The nearest evidence for Mesolithic practices comes from the West Cotton excavations, c. 1.5km to the south, whilst Neolithic funerary monuments have been identified at West Cotton and Redlands Farm. Occasional scatters of Neolithic flint attest to the presence of nomadic peoples moving through this landscape, which will have been largely wooded.

4.1.2 Bronze Age activities (2,000 to 1,000 BC) are better represented. As the landscape was partially cleared of its woodland, distinctive burial barrows were constructed for the dead and can be seen throughout the landscape. Excavated examples are recorded at West Cotton and Irthlingborough. Cropmarks of possible barrows are scattered throughout the landscape.
4.1.3 Throughout Britain the **Iron Age** period (1,000 BC to AD 43) represents a time when farming settlements became more widely established and human groups created a substantial reduction in the level of woodland cover with the creation of fields for pasture and arable. Throughout the Nene Valley and its hinterland, small settlement sites became established, marking a transition from the nomadic populations of earlier periods. Many such sites have been identified as cropmarks and by surface scatters of artefacts. At least 20 examples are recorded in the region, including Crow Hill, Thorpe End, Mallows Cotton, Westfield Spinney, Stanwick and Top Lodge, the latter site within the current development boundary.

4.1.4 The coming of **Roman Britain** (43 to 410 AD) equates with a massive increase in the material record. Settlements expanded in size and number to cope with the increased demands for produce, and new areas of land were exploited as population levels increased. Throughout the wider region this period of expansion is reflected in an increase in the quantity and diversity of finds and settlements. The proposed development site lies within the hinterland of the two Roman small towns of Irchester and Titchmarsh. Over 30 Roman settlement sites are recorded in the general region, including Mallows Cotton, Raunds Road, Slade Field, Stanwick and Ringstead. It does not appear that the Iron Age site at Top Lodge was occupied in the Roman period.

4.1.5 Our understanding of the **Anglo-Saxon** period (410 to 1066 AD) is far from clear. Saxon pottery has been recovered from the surface of many fields in the region, including from fields within the proposed development boundary. However, investigation of such pottery scatters has rarely identified contemporary settlement evidence. Identified Saxon settlements in the vicinity include Mallows Cotton, Ringstead Grange, Ringstead South, Raunds and West Cotton.

4.1.6 Occupation within the region increased considerably during the **Medieval** period (1066 - 1560). The survival of the Medieval settlements of Raunds and Ringstead as modern-day settlements, and the earthwork survival of the hamlets of Mill, Mallows and West Cotton considerably enhances our understanding of this period. It is likely that the proposed development site formed part of the open-field system associated with the surrounding settlements during this period.

4.1.7 During the 14th and 15th centuries widespread desertion seems to have occurred around the fringes of the main settlements and the three Cottons were largely abandoned. Their abandonment perhaps reflects their relatively small size and subordinate position in the landscape. The valley side between Mallows and Mill Cotton has been extensively damaged by ironstone quarries which were open from 1871 to 1891.
4.2 **Previous archaeological evaluation**

4.2.1 The site was archaeologically evaluated during the late 1980’s and early 90’s prior to the determination of an application for limestone extraction. Whilst that development did not proceed, the County Archaeological Office did not raise any objections to the development, so long as the archaeological interest of the site was appropriately recorded.

4.2.2 In 1986 a scatter of Iron Age pottery and flint was recorded in the fields to the east of Top Lodge. Aerial photographs had identified cropmarks, suggesting two possible settlement sites. A targeted geophysical survey was carried out in 1990 which provided greater clarity to the character of these sites. Trial trenches were then excavated across them to assess their date and morphology. One site was seen to be of geological origin, but the other was seen to be the remains of an Early Iron Age unenclosed settlement. The settlement was represented by a series of enclosures, ring ditches, linear and gullies.

4.2.3 Other features identified at this time included the site of a post-Medieval windmill and an area which had been subject to quarrying in the 19th century. The windmill is shown on the Inclosure Award Map of 1841 (see Figure 3).

4.3 **Geophysical Survey (figure 2)**

4.3.1 The recent geophysical survey, as part of the current application, comprised of a detailed magnetometer survey supplemented by a magnetic susceptibility scan (Bartlett & Coates 2011). The survey was carried out across all fields where intrusive development is proposed. Findings of clear archaeological interest were present in two of the fields (fields 1 and 3 in the report). Various geophysical anomalies were recorded elsewhere, which could not be fully explained on the survey evidence alone.

4.3.2 The most clearly significant findings were represented by the already known settlement site in field 3, together with a possible ring ditch in field 1. The site of the post-Medieval windmill was also identified in field 1. Other findings appeared to indicate eroded traces of cultivation patterns and field systems of relatively recent date. The significance of two isolated ditch-like features in field 2 was unclear, as also was the origin of two strong (but irregularly grouped) magnetic anomalies in fields 4 and 5.
Figure 2
Trench locations superimposed on geophysical plot

KEY
- Trial trench (blank)
- Trial trench (archaeology)
- 1990 trial trench
- Geophysical survey results
- Site boundary
5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Summary (Figure 2)

5.1.1 Archaeological features were identified within 14 trenches\(^2\). The features identified comprised of ditches, gullies and pits. Two further trenches (27 & 28) encountered boundary ditches of relatively recent origin. Evidence of former quarrying was also identified in trench 4. The remaining trenches were all archaeologically blank. A number of potential features were sample excavated, but they turned out to be either geological in nature, plough furrows or the remains of relatively modern land drains.

5.1.2 The natural geology was encountered between 0.3m and 1.0m below the topsoil horizon. The sub-surface geology varied across the site from a pale brown limestone brash through to compact red-brown boulder clays. The topsoil had a distinct clay matrix and was between 0.20m and 0.30m depth. The subsoil deposit was between 0.05m and 0.70m in depth and was a pale brown clay-silt. All identified archaeological features cut the natural geology and were sealed by either the subsoil or topsoil layers.

5.1.3 A number of artefacts were recovered during the trial trenching exercise, which included pottery sherds, animal bone fragments and a single flint (see reports below). They indicated one specific phase of past archaeological activity, being of Iron Age date. A number of features remain undated, but may be associated with either this phase of activity or the later post-Medieval landscape.

5.2 Trenches 2-4, 6-8, 10, 11, 14, 23-28 and 30-44

5.2.1 The above trenches did not contain any features or finds of archaeological significance. The majority were positioned in blank areas to act as a control or where past cultivation lines were picked up on the geophysical survey. Furrows, being the vestigial remains of former ‘ridge and furrow’ agriculture, were identified in some of these trenches. Section excavation through the shallow furrows demonstrated that they did not overlie areas of earlier archaeology. Trenches 27 and 28 were positioned in an area where the geophysics suggested the presence of a former field boundary. The investigations identified post-Medieval ditches which correspond to those on the early maps of the area, including the 1841 Inclosure Map (see figure 3).

\(^2\) Trenches containing probable archaeological features were Nos. 1, 5, 9, 12, 13, 15 – 22 & 29.
5.3 **Trench 1** (figure 4)

5.3.1 Trench 1 was located in the northern field, covering an area where the geophysics suggested the presence of a possible ring ditch. One curvi-linear ditch [104] was identified corresponding with the geophysics. It had a U-shaped profile and was 1.05m wide by 0.3m in depth, filled with a primary deposit of grey/brown clay silt (103). This was beneath a silt-clay and fragmented limestone fill (102). No artefacts were recovered from the ditch.

*Interpretation*

5.3.2 The excavated curvi-liner ditch corresponds with a circular feature identified in the geophysics survey, which appears to represent a ring ditch. The ditch remains undated.
5.4 **Trench 5** (figure 5)

5.4.1 Trench 5 was positioned to encounter a linear anomaly detected during the geophysical survey. Investigation identified a large ditch [510] at the north-eastern end of the trench, which had been truncated by two smaller ditches [505] & [511] (Plate 3). Ditch [510] had a steep north-eastern side and a concave south-western edge, 1.55m wide and 1.0m deep. It was filled with a brown clay (509), beneath an orange/grey silt clay (508). Small ditch [511] had a U-shaped profile, 0.5m wide and 0.45m deep, filled with two deposits of silt clay, (506) & (507). No finds were recovered from the excavation of either feature.

5.4.2 Ditch [505] truncated [510] and appeared to also truncate [511], although the relationship was unclear. [505] had a V-shaped profile and measured 1.3m wide and up to 0.55m deep. It was filled with grey/brown silt clay (503) beneath yellow/brown sand-clay deposit (504). This ditch also did not contain any artefacts.

**Interpretation**

5.4.3 The ditches correlate with the geophysical plot and appear to represent a re-defined ditch, possibly forming a boundary line, although its exact function and date could not be ascertained within the confines of the evaluation exercise. It may be the continuation of a ditch feature identified in trenches 12, 13, 15 and 16 further to the south.

*Plate 3*

Ditches [505] (left) and [510] (right) in trench 5, looking north-east.
Figure 5
Trench 5 Plan & Section
5.5 **Trench 9** (figure 6)

5.5.1 Trench 9 was positioned to encounter a possible east-west aligned linear feature identified during the geophysical survey. The trench investigation appeared to identify this anomaly in the form of U-shaped ditch [905]. It was 1.75m wide and 0.4m deep, filled with three deposits of silt clay (902) (903) & (904). This ditch did not contain any artefacts.

*Interpretation*

5.5.2 This ditch appears to be a possible boundary which remains undated. It is likely to represent a former ditch and appears to align with a track or footpath leading to the former windmill, as detailed on several mid-19th century estate plans and also the 1841 Inclosure Award (figure 3).

5.6 **Trench 12** (figure 7)

5.6.1 This trench was positioned where the geophysical survey had suggested the continuation of an east-west ditch investigated in trenches 13, 15, 16 & 19. Two ditches [1203] and [1205] were located towards the southern end of the trench (Plate 4).

5.6.2 Both ditches had shallow U-shaped profiles, with [1203] measuring 1.4m wide and 0.4m deep, whereas [1205] was slightly narrower. Both were filled with orange/brown silt clays, which made discerning the relationship between the two ditches impossible. Each fill contained pottery: 1 sherd in (1202) and 1 from (1204), both coarse shell fabrics dated to the Iron Age.

Plate 4

Ditches [1203] and [1205] within trench 12, looking north-eastwards.
Figure 7
Trench 12 Plan & Section

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Interpretation

5.6.3 These ditches appear to be the continuation of a boundary ditch, which was identified in trenches to the north-west and south-east. Pottery recovered from the ditches has been dated to the Iron Age.

5.7 Trench 13 (figure 8)

5.7.1 This trench was positioned in an area where the geophysics suggested the presence of archaeology, being the southern side of an enclosure and the continuation of a ditch, which was also identified in trenches 12 and 15. Two inter-cutting ditches [1303] & [1307] were investigated on the southern side of the enclosure (Plate 5). A further deposit on the line of the ditch to the north remained unexcavated.

5.7.2 The earliest of the two ditches, [1307] had a U-shaped profile, 0.9m wide and 0.6m deep. It was filled with three slightly different deposits of silt clay: [1306] was the primary deposit, beneath [1305], which in turn was beneath the upper fill [1304]. Pottery sherds of both coarse and fine shell fabric were recovered from the upper and lower fills, which have been dated to the Iron Age (see Blinkhorn below).

Plate 5 Ditches [1303] and [1307] within trench 13.

5.7.3 [1307] was truncated by V-shaped ditch [1303], which was 1.3m wide and 0.5m deep. It was filled with an orange/brown silt-clay deposit [1302], which contained animal bone including cattle and large
mammal species. A pottery rim sherd was also recovered, which has been dated to the Early Iron Age (see Blinkhorn below).

**Interpretation**

5.7.4 The inter-cutting ditches appear to represent the southern side to a rectangular enclosure indicated by the geophysical survey. The northern side may have been defined by the continuation of the boundary ditch identified in trenches 12, 15 and 16. The artefactual assemblage indicated activity of Iron Age date.

5.8 **Trench 15** (figure 9)

5.8.1 This trench was positioned in an area where the geophysics suggested the presence of the northern side of an enclosure and the continuation of a ditch identified in trenches 12 and 13. A series of ditches [1507], [1509], [1511] [1513] & [1515] were identified, all on the same alignment as the northern side of the enclosure. A small circular pit [1505] and a linear were also identified. The latter appeared to follow the line of the ditch identified in trenches 12, 13 & 16. A layer of silt (1502) sealed the ditches.

5.8.2 The ditches were generally U-shaped and measured a maximum of 1.0m wide and 0.9m deep [1513]. They were filled with a similar deposit of brown silt clay (1506, 1508, 1510, 1512 & 1514). Relationships between the ditches, if they existed, could not be ascertained. No artefacts were recovered from any of the fills.

5.8.3 The sub-circular pit [1505] was bowl-shaped and had a diameter of c. 1.0m and depth of 0.2m. It was filled with a primary deposit of yellow/grey silt clay (1504), beneath a thin deposit of orange/brown silt sand (1503). Neither fills contained finds.

5.8.4 The shallow deposit of dark grey silt (1502), which sealed the ditches and pit contained several Iron Age pottery sherds, including a rim of an Early Iron Age date. The animal bone recovered included cattle and medium mammal species (see Wood below).

**Interpretation**

5.8.5 The features correspond to readings identified from the geophysical survey. The excavated ditches appear to be the northern side of an enclosure. An unexcavated deposit corresponds with a boundary ditch investigated elsewhere. Although the features did not produce artefacts, a sealing layer contained Iron Age pottery and animal bone.

5.9 **Trench 16** (figure 10)

5.9.1 This trench was positioned in an area where the geophysics suggested the presence of archaeology, being the north-western side of an enclosure. A ditch [1606] was identified which corresponded with the
TRENCH 15 PLAN

TRENCH 15 SECTION

Unexcavated deposit

Figure 9
Trench 15 Plan & Section
line of the enclosure (Plate 6). A further unexcavated ditch was identified in the south-western corner, which corresponded with the boundary investigated in nearby trenches. A small sub-circular deposit also remained unexcavated.

5.9.2 The NW-SE ditch [1606] had a V-shaped profile, measuring 0.7m wide and 0.4m deep. It was filled with several deposits of orange/grey silt-clay. The earliest deposit (1605) contained a fragment of cattle bone, but no dateable artefacts were recovered.

Interpretation

5.9.3 The undated ditch corresponds with part of an enclosure identified on the geophysical plot. It is probably of Iron Age date, by association with nearby features, but only animal bone was recovered from its primary fill. The unexcavated ditch corresponds to the boundary ditch investigated elsewhere.

Plate 6 Ditch [1606], looking north-westwards within trench 16.

5.10 Trench 17 (figure 11)

5.10.1 Trench 17 was positioned in an area where the geophysics suggested the presence of a circular enclosure and pits. It lay toward the NW extent of the identified Iron Age settlement. A number of archaeological deposits were identified, of which a selection were investigated. It was agreed with the CAO that several of the features
would be better understood as part of a wider mitigation strategy. Those features excavated included ditch [1706], associated pit [1704] (Plate 7), ditch/gully [1712] and pit/ditch terminus [1709] (Plate 8).

5.10.2  Ditch [1706] had a shallow, flat-based profile, 0.2m deep and 1.5m wide. It was filled with a grey silt clay (1605), which contained no artefacts. It was truncated by a bowl-shaped pit [1704], 1.6m in diameter and 0.25m deep. No finds were recovered from the pit’s two silty fills.

5.10.3  A ditch with an east-west alignment [1712] was investigated at the eastern end of the trench. Its southern edge lay beyond the confines of the trench. It had a shallow concave profile filled with silty clays that contained no finds. The ditch was truncated by a circular pit [1709], 1.6m in diameter and 0.5m deep. This was filled with two stony silt clays (1708 and 1707), both which contained Iron Age pottery. One of the sherds had a hole through it, indicating a secondary use as a spindle whorl (see Blinkhorn below). Animal bone, including horse, cattle and sheep/goat species, together with fragments of burnt daub were also recovered from this context.
Figure 11
Trench 17 Plan & Sections
Interpretation

5.10.4 A number of archaeological deposits were identified in this trench, some of which correspond to the geophysical survey plot. Those that were excavated were shown to represent ditches and pits. Whilst finds were sparse, one of the pits [1709] contained well stratified sherds of Iron Age pottery and animal bone.

5.11 Trench 18 (figure 12)

5.11.1 This trench was positioned to investigate the south-eastern corner of a rectangular enclosure at the southern edge of the identified Iron Age settlement. A complex series of intercutting ditches were identified on the line of the enclosure ditch (Plate 9). These were truncated by a later east-west ditch [1806]. A pit [1822] was also investigated.

5.11.2 The earliest in the series of the intercutting ditches was [1818], which was respectively truncated by [1815], [1812] and finally [1809]. All the ditches had U-shaped profiles and varied between 0.5m and 1.0m width and 0.5m depth. Each ditch was filled with two deposits of silt clay. Upper fills (1816) and (1810) contained pottery dating to the Iron Age. A single flake from a dark, translucent piece of flint was recovered from fill (1813), which is probably of Neolithic or Bronze Age date and residual in this context. Animal bone fragments were recovered from several of the ditch fills.
Figure 12
Trench 18 Plan & Sections
5.11.3 The intercutting ditches were truncated by a shallow U-profile ditch [1806]. It was filled with thin primary silt clay deposits (1805) and (1804) beneath a thick grey/brown clay silt (1803). Both (1805) and (1803) contained Iron Age pottery sherds, including a rim fragment that has been securely dated to the Middle Iron Age elsewhere in Northamptonshire (see Blinkhorn below). An ovoid pit [1822] was located nearby but contained no finds.

Interpretation

5.11.3 The intercutting ditches correspond with the line of a rectangular enclosure identified on the geophysical plot. The pottery assemblage shows that the features were in use during the Iron Age. A later ditch also contained pottery of Iron Age date.

![Plate 9](image)

Ditches [1806, 1809, 1812, 1815 & 1818] in trench 18, looking north-eastwards

5.12 Trench 19 (figure 13)

5.12.1 Trench 19 was positioned to investigate the south-eastern continuation of a ditch identified in the geophysical survey. Two ditches were identified at the northern end of the trench, one with evidence of a recut (Plates 10 & 11).
5.12.2 Ditch [1908] had a V-shaped profile, 1.6m wide and 0.5m deep. It was filled with a single grey/brown silt clay (1907) containing 7 sherds of Iron Age pottery.

Plate 10
Ditch [1908] in trench 19, looking westwards

5.12.3 To its immediate south was ditch [1906] which had a shallow U-shaped profile, 1m wide and 0.25m deep with two fills that contained no finds. It had been re-cut along its northern edge by U-shaped ditch [1903], which was filled with a single dark brown silt clay (1902), which contained 4 sherds of Iron Age pottery in a coarse shell fabric and 38 sherds of fine shell fabric pottery of a similar date (see Blinkhorn below). Fragments of horse, cattle, sheep/goat and large mammal bones were also recovered.

Interpretation
5.12.4 Ditch [1906] with re-cut [1903] followed the alignment of the boundary identified on the geophysical plot. This is likely to be a continuation of the ditch identified in the trenches to the north. Ditch [1908] appeared to follow the line of a cultivation furrow, as indicated on the geophysical plot, but it also contained sherds of Iron Age pottery, suggesting it forms part of the identified settlement.
Figure 13
Trench 19 Plan & Sections
Plate 11
Ditches [1903] & [1906] in trench 19, looking north-west

5.13 **Trench 20** (figure 14)

5.13.1 Trench 20 was positioned across a zone of weak magnetic anomalies, apparently outside of the enclosure arrangement as identified on the geophysical plot. Several archaeological deposits were, however, identified of which a representative sample were investigated.

5.13.2 Ditch [2007] had a U-shaped profile, 0.75m wide and 0.3m deep, and was filled with three deposits of silty clay. The upper deposit (2004) contained 8 sherds of both coarse and fine-shell tempered Iron Age pottery and a fragment of animal bone. Pit [2003] was circular in plan with a bowl profile. It was filled with a single clay silt which contained no finds (Plate 12).

*Interpretation*

5.13.3 Although the features identified in this trench do not correspond to readings on the geophysical plot, they do appear to represent features associated with the Iron Age settlement recorded to the immediate east.
5.14 **Trench 21** (figure 15)

5.14.1 Trench 21 was positioned to examine a rectangular enclosure, as indicated on the geophysical plot. Several archaeological deposits were identified.

5.14.2 Ditch [2106] was seen to represent the enclosure. It had concave sides and a flat base, measuring 2m wide and 0.7m deep (Plate 13). It was filled with a primary deposit of grey silt clay (2105), beneath a dark brown clay (2104). Both fills contained sherds of Iron Age pottery. One fragment from (2105) was decorated with finger-tipped shoulders and is thought to be of Early Iron Age date (see Blinkhorn below). Both contexts contained animal bone, including sheep/goat along with medium and large mammal species (see Wood below).

5.14.3 To the south was ditch terminus [2103]. It was filled with a single deposit of dark silt clay (2102), which also contained Iron Age pottery and animal bone.
Figure 15

Trench 21 Plan & Sections

Drawn by: GC 06.02.12
Checked: AR

PHOENIX CONSULTING ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED
STUDLEY HOUSE
STATION ROAD
TURVEY
BEDFORDSHIRE MK43 8BH
01234 888 800
Plate 13
Ditch [2106] in trench 21, looking eastwards

Interpretation

5.14.4 Ditch [2106] appeared to be the enclosure ditch as indicated by the geophysical plot. In addition were several other features including a shallow ditch terminus [2103]. All excavated features dated to the Iron Age.

5.15 Trench 22 (figure 16)

5.15.1 This trench was positioned across an area of strong geophysical activity, the nature of which was difficult to interpret. The trench was positioned at the southern extent of the identified Iron Age settlement. Two features were investigated in the trench. It was agreed with the CAO that several of the unexcavated features would be better understood as part of a wider mitigation investigation.

5.15.2 Ditch [2209] had a shallow U-shaped profile, 2.2m wide and 0.35m deep. It was filled with three deposits of clay silt which contained no finds (Plate 14). To its south was a probable ditch terminus [2205] which continued beyond the edge of the trench. It had concave sides and a round base, measuring 2.3m wide and 0.6m deep. One of its intermediate fills (2203) contained 7 sherds of coarse Iron Age pottery, together with several fragments of animal bone.
Figure 16
Trench 22 Plan & Sections

TRENCH 22 PLAN

TRENCH 22 SECTIONS

Unexcavated deposit
Land drain

Figure 16
Trench 22 Plan & Sections

Drawn by: GC
Date: 06/02/12
Scale: Illustrated

Checked: Client
Fieldwork Cde.

PC No.

PC Lab/mm
Plate 14
Ditch [2209] in trench 22, looking south-eastwards

Interpretation

5.15.3 A number of possible archaeological features were identified in this trench. These included a ditch [2209] and ditch terminus [2205], the latter of which contained pottery of Iron Age date. The features appear to be a continuation of the activity identified in trenches to the north and north-east.

5.16 Trench 29 (figure 17)

5.16.1 Trench 29 was located to investigate the northern side of a possible rectangular enclosure identified during the geophysical survey. A single undated east-west ditch [2904] was located, which corresponded with the line of the postulated enclosure ditch. It had a U-shaped profile, 0.8m wide and 0.25m deep, and was filled with a red/brown clay silt (2903) with no finds.

Interpretation

5.16.2 An undated ditch that may be the northern side of an enclosure. The ditch remains undated and is beyond the area of identified Iron Age activity to the north.
Figure 17
Trench 29 Plan & Section

TRENCH 29 PLAN

TRENCH 29 SECTION

0 0.5 m

N

S

(2903)

(2904)

Unexcavated deposit
Land drain

0 2 m

0 0.5 m

PHOENIX CONSULTING ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED
STUDLEY HOUSE
STATION ROAD
TURVEY
BEDFORDSHIRE MK43 8BH
01234 888 800

Trench 29 Plan & Section

Drawn by Date Draft Scale
GC 06.02.12 Illustrated
Checked Client
AR

PC No.
6.0 **THE FINDS**

6.1 **Worked Flint** by Andy Richmond

*Introduction*

6.1.1 During the trench investigations only a single piece of worked flint was recovered, being from fill (1813) of ditch [1815] in trench 18. Trench 18 was positioned at the southern end of a tight group of enclosures which have been shown to represent a small Iron Age settlement. Fragments of animal bone were also recovered from ditch [1815]. Context (1813) represents the feature’s upper fill.

*Description*

6.1.2 Context 1813: A single small flake from a dark, translucent piece of flint. The flake does not display any evidence of working or re-touch, nor much evidence of erosion. The rear displays the characteristic bulb of percussion with concentric fracture lines.

*Conclusions*

6.1.3 The presence of a single flint flake can tell us little. It is likely to be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date and represents a residual find within this probable Iron Age ditch feature.

6.2 **Prehistoric Pottery** by Paul Blinkhorn

*Introduction*

6.2.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 180 sherds, with a total weight of 996g. It comprised entirely Iron Age material.

*Fabrics*

6.2.2 Two fabric types were noted, as follows:

*F1: Coarse shell.* Reddish brown- to black, coarse, unfinished sherds with moderate to dense temper of angular coarse shell fragments up to 10mm, with rare quartzite, grog, flint, organic material or ironstone. 80 sherds, 611g.

*F2: Fine shell.* Dark grey/brown to black fabric with smooth, finished or lightly burnished surfaces. Sparse to moderate angular shell fragments up to. 100 sherds, 385g.
6.2.3 The fabrics from this stage of trial trenching were similar to those from the earlier excavations at the site carried out in 1990 (Shaw & Blinkhorn 1992), and could not be closely dated other than to within the broad Iron Age period.

6.2.4 The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a terminus post quem. The fabrics are very typical of the Iron Age pottery of the County, and can be paralleled at most sites of the period (e.g. Jackson and Chapman 2004, 40-1).

Chronology

6.2.5 In terms of chronology, most of the assemblage comprises plain body- or base-sherds which are entirely undiagnostic, and could date to virtually anytime within the Iron Age. However, three rimsherds and a sherd with finger-tip decoration, all from closed jar forms, were present. The sherd with finger-tipping, in context (2105), is almost certainly of Early Iron Age date. Vessels with finger-tipped shoulders are typical of the period in the region, and known from a number of sites, such as Gretton (Jackson and Knight 1985, Figs. 6–7).

6.2.6 Of the rimsherds, one, from context (1502), is high and quite long and with an everted profile. Again, this appears to be Early Iron Age, as a number of vessels with similar profiles were noted at Gretton, including some examples with finger-tipped shoulders (ibid.). The second, from context (1302), is flattened and inturned, with a finger-tipped rim-top. Again, this has parallels at Gretton (e.g. ibid. Fig. 6 no. 23), and similarly appears to be of Early Iron Age date. The third rimsherd, from context (1805), is upright with an external bead. Such forms were fairly common amongst the Middle Iron Age pottery from Weekley in Northamptonshire (e.g. Jackson and Dix 1987, Fig. 29).

6.2.7 Middle Iron Age activity at this site does appear to have been somewhat limited. If the latter rim is Middle Iron Age, it is the only sherd from the site which can be said of that date. Significantly, Scored Ware, a type-fossil of the Middle Iron Age in the region (Elsdon 1992), is entirely absent, so it would appear from the admittedly limited evidence that the main period of activity at the site is in the Early Iron Age (c 8th – 6th/5th century BC), with the site perhaps being abandoned in the early years of the Middle Iron Age (c 6th/5th – 2nd century BC). Further excavation is likely to clarify the issue.
Table 1
Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tr</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
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<td>1502</td>
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<td>184</td>
<td>8 27</td>
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<td>3 17</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>100 385</td>
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</table>

6.2.8 Context (1708) produced a sherd with a hole which had been drilled through it post-firing. Whether this related to the function of the pot or the hole was made post-breakage is uncertain, but at Gretton, three sherds with drilled holes and evidence of post-breakage shaping, were interpreted as spindle whorls (ibid. Fig. 10 nos. 10-12). The sherd from this site, if it is a spindle whorl, is broken and incomplete.

6.2.9 Fragments of burnt daub weighing 106g were noted in context (1707), and another piece (9g) occurred in (2102) along with a nodule of red iron ore (13g).

6.3 Animal Bone by Jennifer Wood

Introduction

6.3.1 A total of 91 (926g) refitted fragments of animal bone were recovered during a program of archaeological trial trenching at Top Lodge, Ringstead, Northamptonshire. The remains were recovered from a series of ditches, pits and layers from both Iron Age and undated contexts within Trenches 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22.
Methodology

6.3.2 Identification of the bone was undertaken with access to a reference collection and published guides. All the animal remains were counted and weighed, and where possible, identified to species, element, side and zone (Serjeantson 1996). Also fusion data, butchery marks (Binford 1981), gnawing, burning and pathological changes were noted when present. Ribs and vertebrae were only recorded to species when they were substantially complete and could accurately be identified. Undiagnostic bones were recorded as micro (mouse size), small (rabbit size), medium (sheep size) or large (cattle size). The separation of sheep and goat bones was done using the criteria of Boessneck (1969) and Prummel and Frisch (1986). Where distinctions could not be made, the bone was recorded as sheep/goat (s/g).

6.3.3 The condition of the bone was graded using the criteria stipulated by Lyman (1996). Grade 0 being the best preserved bone and grade 5 indicating that the bone had suffered such structural and attritional damage as to make it unrecognisable.

6.3.4 The quantification of species was carried out using the total fragment count, in which the total number of fragments of bone and teeth was calculated for each taxon. Where fresh breaks were noted, fragments were refitted and counted as one.

6.3.5 Tooth eruption and wear stages were measured using a combination of Halstead (1985), Grant (1982) and Levine (1982), and fusion data was analysed according to Silver (1969). Measurements of adult, that is, fully fused bones were taken according to the methods of von den Driesch (1976), with asterisked (*) measurements indicating bones that were reconstructed or had slight abrasion of the surface.

Results

Taphonomy:

6.3.6 The remains were generally of a moderate overall condition, averaging at grade 3 on the Lyman criteria (1996). No evidence of butchery was noted on any of the remains. No evidence of pathology was noted on any of the remains.

6.3.7 Carnivore gnawing was noted on three fragments of bone recovered from ditches [1303], [2103] and [2106]. The presence of carnivore gnawing on some of the bones suggests that the remains were left open to scavengers after/or as part of the disposal process.

6.3.8 A single fragment of medium mammal long bone recovered from early Iron Age layer (1502) displayed evidence of burning.
Species Representation:

6.3.9 As can be seen from Table 2, cattle were the predominant species identified within the assemblage, with *equid* (horse family), sheep/goat and dog remains also identified as present.

6.3.10 Although a small collection, the animal bone assemblage was fairly cohesively dated from the Iron Age and the represented species are typical of the period.

6.3.11 The condition of the remains, high fragmentation and the small assemblage size provides very little further information, save the presence of the species on site. The skeletal elements represented suggest the remains were probably from butchery waste.

6.3.12 The animal bone assemblage was fairly evenly distributed between the features within trenches 13, 15, 17, 19 and 21, with isolated small assemblages from trenches 16, 18 and 22. In the event of further works, the site is liable to produce more bone of a similar nature with a good potential to provide further information on the economy and animal husbandry on site.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Identified Bone*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
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<th>19</th>
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<td>Undated</td>
<td>Iron Age</td>
<td>Iron Age</td>
<td>Undated</td>
<td>Iron Age</td>
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<td>Early Iron Age</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
DISCUSSION

Ringstead Quarry: archaeology

7.1.1 The programme of trial trenching was successful in its aims. It confirmed the presence of one main area of archaeological activity, as indicated by the geophysical survey. The works successfully determined the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of surviving archaeological remains across the site.

7.1.2 The focus of identified archaeology was c. 350m to the east of the redundant farm buildings of Top Lodge (trenches 12, 13 and 15 - 22). These trenches clearly identified previous settlement in the form of archaeological features (ditches, gullies and pits) which were shown to be of Iron Age date.

7.1.3 A large boundary ditch that continued on an NW-SE alignment appeared to form the northern boundary to the identified archaeology, and was picked up in trenches 12, 13, 15, 16 and 19. A ditch identified in trench 5 may have been a continuation of this feature, although it remains undated at this location. Where investigated, the ditch often displayed re-cutting, suggesting a re-definition of the boundary over time.

7.1.4 Evidence for what are likely to have been settlement enclosures were identified in trenches 13, 15, 17, 18, 21 and 22. The geophysical survey suggests that these were sub-rectangular in shape, although a circular feature was identified in trench 17. The enclosure identified in trench 18 had previously been identified in the 1990 evaluation³ (Shaw & Blinkhorn 1992, 7). Several pits and ditches were also investigated in these trenches which appeared to relate to the identified settlement activity. Several features identified in trenches 20 and 21 were not visible during the geophysical survey, and indicate a continuation of the archaeological activity in this direction.

7.1.5 The pottery yielded from the excavated features suggests occupation during the Iron Age. A number of sherds were positively dated to the Early Iron Age, with only one sherd dating to the Middle Iron Age. No sherds appeared to be of Late Iron Age date. Other artefacts recovered include animal bone, a single flint and some daub. The assemblage suggests the presence of an Early Iron Age farmstead characterised by rectangular and sub-circular enclosures.

7.1.5 Outside of this main zone of activity very little archaeology was encountered. This confirmed the picture provided by the geophysical survey. A possible ring ditch (Early Bronze Age?) was identified in trench 1 and field ditches were identified in trenches 9 and 29, the

³ Identified in trench 3 and referred to as enclosure 3
latter of which relates to a possible rectangular enclosure indicated on the geophysical plot. All these features remain undated. Field boundaries, shown on the early estate maps of the area were identified in trenches 27 and 28. An area of former quarrying was identified in trench 4.

7.1.6 The trial trenching, in conjunction with the geophysical survey, has enabled us to clearly define those areas where the proposed development would impact upon buried archaeological remains. In these areas suitable mitigation will need to be implemented prior to development. Outside of these areas little or no impact is envisaged.
Acknowledgements

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The fieldwork was carried out by Geoff Marshall, Charlotte Bold and Tracy Coyne under the supervision and management of Gary Coates and Andy Richmond.

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