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Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation at Lower Grange Farm, Markfield, Leicestershire (SK 489 094)

by Gerwyn Richards



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An Archaeological Evaluation at
Lower Grange Farm,
London Road, Markfield,
Leicestershire.

(NGR SK 489 094)

Gerwyn Richards

Planning Permission: N/A

For: Jelson Ltd

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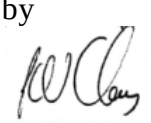
Signed:  **Date**: 31.01.2011

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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services were commissioned by Jelson Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation of Lower Grange Farm, Markfield, Leicestershire in advance of the construction of a new residential development. The proposed development area had been identified as being an area of archaeological potential.

A total of 12 evaluation trenches were machine excavated and recorded. None revealed any evidence of archaeological significance. It is possible that the wooded nature of this part of Leicestershire meant the proposed development area remained wooded up until comparatively recently and therefore no significant occupation, of any period occurred until the land was deforested and enclosed during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The archive for the archaeological work will be held by Leicestershire County Council, under the accession number X.A7.2011.

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services were commissioned by Jelson Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the proposed development works at Lower Grange Farm, London Road, Markfield, Leicestershire (SK 489 094; Fig. 1). The proposed development involves the construction of 112 new residential units with roadways, open spaces and associated infrastructure on a site of approximately 4.26 hectares. An archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared on the proposed development area (Hunt 2010), as well as an archaeological geophysical survey (Hancock 2010) but no previous intrusive archaeological work has been carried out within the proposed development area.



Figure 1: Site location Scale 1:50000

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2. Background

Archaeological evaluation of the site by trial trenching was requested by Leicestershire County Council Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCC HNET) on behalf of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 155 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Glacial Till overlying Marlstone with bands of sandstone.

The proposed development area lies to the south of the historic settlement core of Markfield. An archaeological desk based assessment commissioned by Jelson Ltd (Hunt 2010) indicated that there are no known archaeological sites within the proposed development area. However, the Historic Environment Record for Leicestershire & Rutland (HER) indicates a number of known archaeological sites within the vicinity of the proposed development area, including the medieval and post medieval village core of Markfield (HER Ref MLE5940).

In addition, various archaeological remains and sites have been located within the vicinity of the proposed development area including two Roman roof tiles found during quarrying around 700m east south-east of the proposed development area (HER Ref MLE8338). A large amount of pottery and some kiln bars also Roman in date was discovered during field-walking around 900m south-west of the proposed development area, suggesting an occupation site (HER Ref MLE2945). A single

sherd of Anglo-Saxon pottery has been found at a site to the south-east of Markfield Lodge, around 700m south-west of the proposed development area (HER Ref MLE6184). The Church of St. Michael, 500m north-west of the proposed development area has 12th century origins (HER Ref MLE11696). The remains of medieval fishponds lay around 200m north-west of the proposed development area (HER Ref MLE2943). The medieval deer park of Groby Park lies around 600m east of the proposed development area (HER Refs MLE2754 & MLE2779).



Figure 2:
Proposed development area; the green shaded area is excluded from the development.

3. Aims and Methodology

The main objectives of the evaluation were through archaeological trial trenching:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits in areas to be affected by the development.
- To provide information on the extent, character, condition and date range of archaeological deposits within the application area.
- To assess the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

In consultation with Planning Control Archaeologist it was decided to evaluate the impact of proposed development with the excavation of 13 20m x 1.6m trenches (Fig. 3). In view of the revised area of exclusion (Fig.2) this was revised to twelve trenches. One trench specifically targeted a potential archaeological anomaly identified by the geophysical survey. The alignment of two further trenches was also altered at the request of the Planning Control Archaeologist. A further trench was also moved to sample the southernmost part of the proposed development area. The evaluation took place between January 25th & 27th 2011. The trenches were excavated by a 16 tonne Back Actor using a ditching bucket.

The archaeological work addressed the requirements detailed in the letter of advice (LCCHNET 08/11/2010) and *Design Specification for archaeological work* (ULAS 11-554).

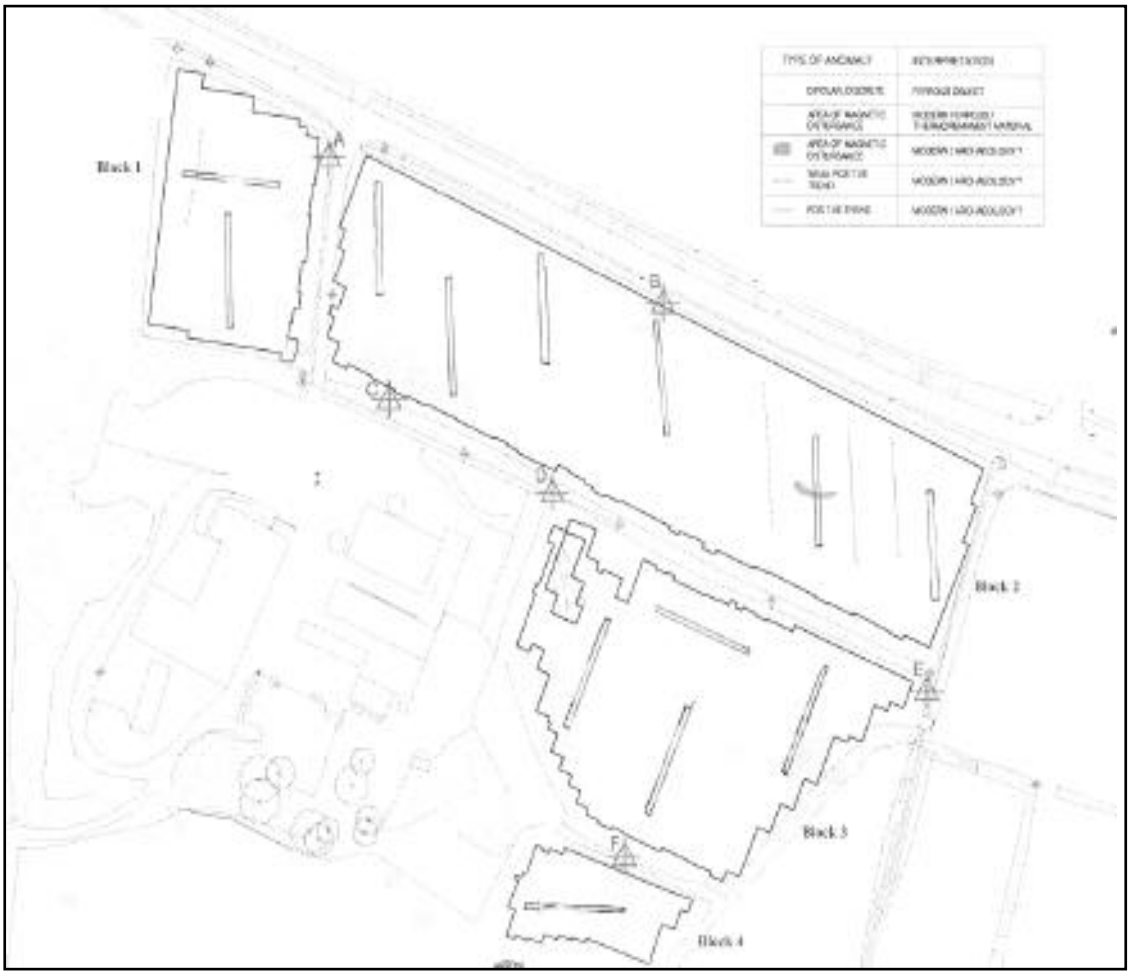

Figure 3
Proposed trench location plan, overlaid on results of geophysical survey.

4. Results of Trial Trench Evaluation

4.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned north – south, adjacent to the easternmost boundary of the proposed development area (*Figure 4*). The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.25m to 0.32m of plough soil was excavated, exposing a thin layer of silty clay subsoil. Beneath the subsoil a horizon of mid-yellow brown silty-clay was exposed, excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.4m to 0.5m below the existing ground level. A junction between two granite filled field drains was exposed at the northern end of the trench.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned north to south, approximately 20metres west of trench 1 (*Figure 4*), the trench was located in order to sample an anomaly identified by the geophysical survey. The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.23m to 0.32m of plough soil was excavated revealing a similar depth of subsoil as trench 1; the underlying substratum was also the same. Excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.35m to 0.5m below the existing ground level. Two further granite filled drains were exposed.

Hand cleaning at this level defined an area of sands and gravels substratum which matched the location of the anomaly. This area was further machine reduced to approximately 0.7m below the existing ground level which confirmed that the sands and gravels were geological in origin, possibly a fluvial feature (*Figure 5*).

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned west-north-west to east-south-east, approximately 46 metres west of trench 2 (*Figure 4*). Again the alignment was altered at the request of the Planning Control Archaeologist. The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.2m to 0.3m of plough soil was excavated revealing a thin layer of subsoil; the underlying substratum was the same as that present in trench 1. Excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.4m to 0.55m below the existing ground level. A granite filled drain was exposed towards the western edge of the trench, on a slightly different alignment to the trench. Again an examination of the greyscale plot of gradiometer data clearly records this drain.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned west-north-west to east-south-east, approximately 29 metres south of trench 3 (*Figure 4*). The alignment was altered at the request of the LCC Planning Archaeologist. The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.2m to 0.3m of plough soil was excavated revealing a thin layer of subsoil; the underlying substratum was the same as that present in Trench 1. Excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.35m to 0.6m below the existing ground level. A granite filled drain was exposed towards the northern edge of the trench, on the same alignment as the trench (*Figure 6*). An examination of the greyscale plot of gradiometer data clearly records this drain.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was aligned north to south, on the highest point of the of the proposed development area (*Figure 4*). The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.15m to 0.26m of plough soil was excavated revealing a very thin layer of subsoil; the underlying substratum was light orange-brown clay. Excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.26m to 0.34m below the existing ground level. Two furrows, aligned east to west were exposed within the trench (*Figure 7*). These furrows relate to early post-medieval ploughing.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.6 Trench 6

Trench 6 was aligned north– south, approximately 33metres west of trench 5 (*Figure 4*), again on the highest point of the of the proposed development area. The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.18m to 0.25m of plough soil was excavated revealing a very thin layer of subsoil; the underlying substratum was light orange-brown clay. Excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.28m to 0.34m below the existing ground level. Again two furrows were exposed, aligned east to west.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.7 Trench 7

Trench 7 was aligned north north east – south south west, adjacent to the westernmost boundary of the proposed development area (*Figure 4*). This part of the proposed development area consisted of rough pasture. The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.
Approximately 0.2m to 0.3m of topsoil was excavated, exposing a thin layer of silty clayey subsoil. Beneath the subsoil a horizon of mid-yellow brown silty-clay was

exposed, excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.4m to 0.55m below the existing ground level. A granite filled field drain was seen to truncate an earlier ceramic field drain towards the northern end of the trench, which suggests the granite filled drains seen here and elsewhere within the proposed development area are relatively modern.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.8 Trench 8

Trench 8 was aligned east to west, perpendicular to trench 7 and approximately 23metres to the south (*Figure 4*), again within the field of rough pasture. The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.2m to 0.3m of topsoil was excavated, exposing a thin layer of silty clayey subsoil. Beneath the subsoil a horizon of mid-yellow brown silty-clay was exposed, excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.5m to 0.65m below the existing ground level.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.9 Trench 9

Trench 9 was the first of the trenches to be excavated within the southernmost part of the proposed development area (*Figure 4*). This field was under pasture, but appeared to be badly draining with areas of standing water. The trench was aligned east – west, adjacent to the hedgerow between the northern and southern fields. The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.12m to 0.29m of topsoil was excavated, exposing a thin layer of silty-clay subsoil. Beneath the subsoil a horizon of lighter yellow brown clay was exposed, excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.35m to 0.52m below the existing ground level.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.10 Trench 10

Trench 10 was aligned north to south, approximately 18 metres south-west of trench 9 (*Figure 4*). The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.1m to 0.23m of topsoil was excavated, exposing a thin layer of silty clay subsoil. Beneath the subsoil a horizon of lighter yellow brown clay was exposed, excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.3m to 0.4m below the existing ground level. Two furrows, aligned east to west were exposed within the trench.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.11 Trench 11

Trench 10 was aligned north to south, approximately 35 metres south of trench 9 (*Figure 4*). The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.14m to 0.27m of topsoil was excavated, exposing a thin layer of silty-clay subsoil. Beneath the subsoil a horizon of lighter yellow brown clay was exposed, excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.28m to 0.45m below the existing ground level. Two furrows, aligned east to west were exposed within the trench.

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling.

4.12 Trench 12

Trench 12 was aligned north-east to south-west, adjacent to the easternmost boundary of the proposed development area approximately 45metres south east of trench 9 (*Figure 4*). The trench was 20m long and 1.6m wide.

Approximately 0.17m to 0.26m of topsoil was excavated, exposing a thin layer of silty-clay subsoil. Beneath the subsoil a horizon of lighter yellow brown clay was exposed. Excavation ceased at this level, approximately 0.46m to 0.58m below the existing ground level (*Figure 8*).

No remains of archaeological significance were found within the trench and it was recorded and released for backfilling. A large amount of plastic waste was found within the topsoil at the northern end of the trench, which may have caused the area of magnetic disturbance recorded by the geophysical survey.

All the trenches within this southern field became rapidly inundated with water.

5. Conclusion

The proposed development area occupied a promising location within a rich archaeological landscape to the south of the historic settlement core of Markfield, but no evidence of archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered during the course of this evaluation. It is possible that the wooded nature of this part of Leicestershire meant the proposed development area remained un-enclosed and forested until comparatively recently and therefore no significant occupation, of any period, occurred until the land was deforested and enclosed during the 18th and 19th centuries.

6. Archive & Publication

The site archive consists of:

1 A3 permagraph sheet showing trench location plan
1 A3 paper trench location plan
CD containing 36 digital images
2 A4 contact sheet
36 Black & White negatives and contact prints
1 A4 photo index sheet
12 A4 trench recording sheets
Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report Number 2011-015)
Unbound copy of Geophysical Survey: Land Adjacent to Lower Grange Farm, Markfield, Leicestershire (ULAS Report Number 2010-103)

The archive will be held at Leicester County Council Museums under the Accession Number X.A7.2011

A version of the summary (above) will be submitted to the editor of the local journal *Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* for inclusion in the next edition.

7. References

Hancock, A. 2010 *Geophysical Survey: Land Adjacent to Lower Grange Farm, Markfield, Leicestershire.* Archaeological Services & Consultancy. ULAS Report No 2010-103.

Hunt, L. 2010 *An archaeological desk-based assessment for land at Lower Grange Farm, London Road, Markfield, Leicestershire, (SK 489 094).* ULAS Report 2010-059.

IfA, 2008 *Code of Conduct*

IfA, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

ULAS 2011 *Design Specification for archaeological work at Lower Grange Farm, London Road, Markfield, Leicestershire NGR SK 489 094.*

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31.01.2011

ID	OASIS entry summary
Project Name	London Road, Markfield
Summary	The evaluation revealed no evidence of archaeological remains
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Gerwyn Richards
Previous/Future work	Previous: DBA/geophysical survey. / Future: unknown
Current Land Use	Arable and pasture fields
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-application
Site Co ordinates	SK 862 060
Start/end dates of field work	25/01/2011-27/01/2011
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Museum
Study Area	5.7ha
Associated project reference codes	LCC Museum accession No. XA7.2011

Figure 4 Trench location plan overlaid on to interpretation of gradiometer data.

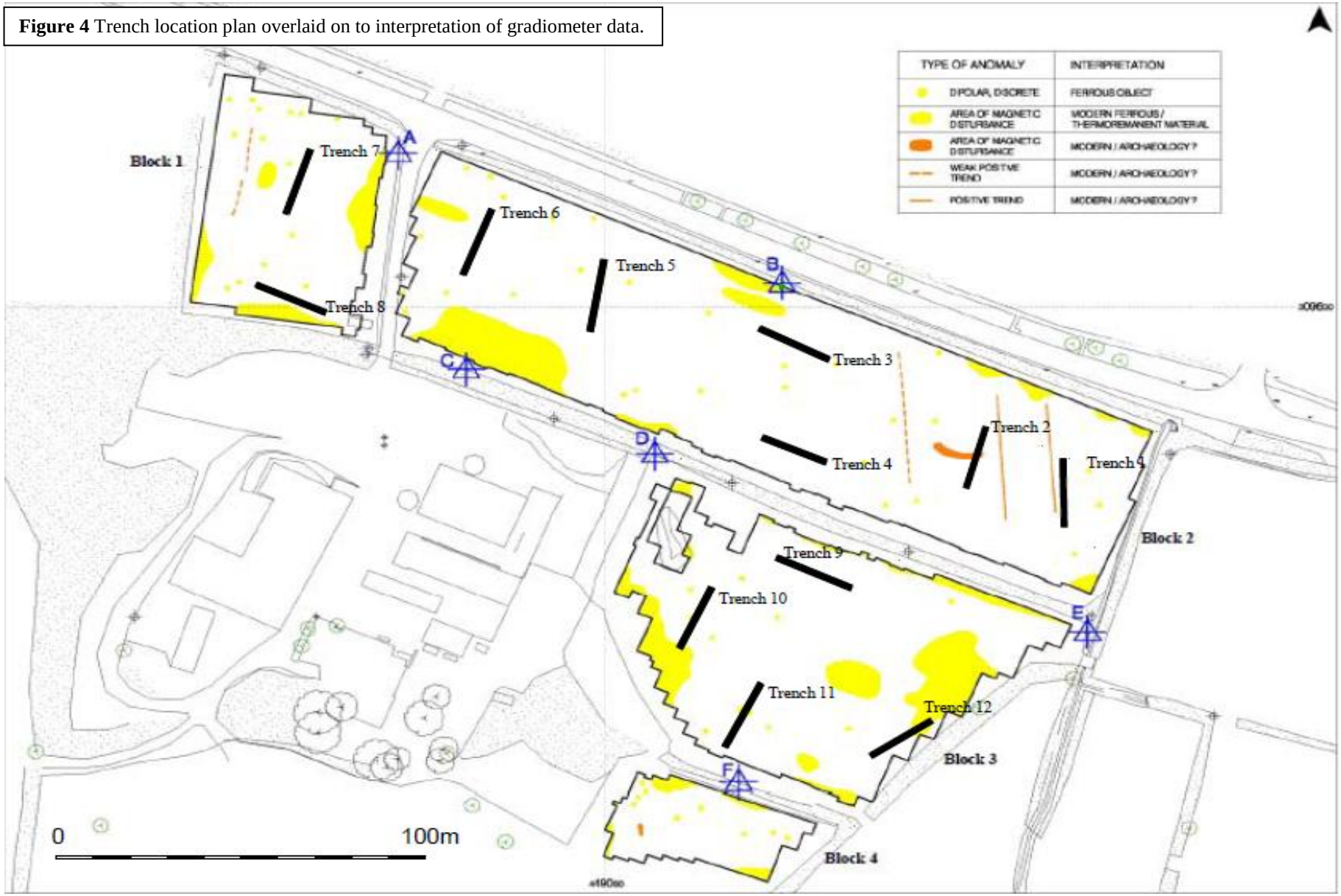



Figure 5 Trench 2 (looking north east).



Figure 6 Trench 4 showing granite drain.



Figure 7 Trench 5 Showing Furrows.



Figure 8 Trench 12.

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