
**An Interim Summary of Archaeological Mitigation
at Area 13, Magna Park, Lutterworth
Leicestershire
November 2020 to March 2021**



Drone photo of Area 13

Scale 1:1250

Area 13 preliminary phase plan

Fig x



1 BACKGROUND

Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) carried out a program of archaeological investigations at Magna Park, Lutterworth, Harborough District, Leicestershire. The program was devised and managed by RPS Consulting Ltd on behalf of their clients, GLP. Outline planning permission for the construction of an extension to Magna Park was granted at appeal (Planning Ref: 15/01531/OUT; Appeal Ref: APP/F2415/W/18/3206389). The scheme of archaeological works was designed to mitigate against potential development impacts in compliance with Condition 18 of the planning approval.

This document comprises a provisional summary report outlining the results of investigations within Area 13 of the development site. Area 13 encompasses arable fields totalling 4.17ha and is centred on NGR SP 492 863. The fieldwork was carried out between November 2020 and March 2021.

2 OVERVIEW

Five phases of Iron Age and Roman activity were established during the investigations in Area 13, relating to settlement, funerary practices and agricultural management. The majority of the archaeological features present had been disturbed by medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.

3 PHASE 1 – MIDDLE IRON AGE

A small farmstead was established during Phase 1 of occupation within Area 13, which encompassed a collection of three modestly sized curvilinear enclosures and potential accommodation in the form of a single round house, which was a structure where people would have lived and cooked. The dimensions, layout and morphology of the enclosure ditches suggests that their main function may have been for stock management.

The features attributed to this phase of activity were consistent with short-lived or seasonal use of space, being dispersed and of a relatively small-scale. Such settlements were common across the region during the early to middle Iron Age period and were representative of more mobile settlement patterns and herding practices.

4 PHASE 2 – MIDDLE TO LATE IRON AGE

The transient settlement established during Phase 1 of occupation appears to have been replaced by a more substantial field system, representing a greater focus on the agricultural economy of the landscape. As with the previous phase of activity, the remains were extremely fragmentary and comprised several incomplete enclosures demarcated by ‘L-shaped’ and curvilinear ditches.

5 PHASE 3 -LATE IRON AGE

A small cemetery of 25 cremation burials was identified towards the eastern part of Area 13. At present, it remains unclear whether this cemetery relates to the nearby settlement established during the previous phase of activity or if it is in fact associated with a settlement positioned outside of Area 13. The vessels in which the cremations were buried were common late Iron Age types, being hand-built, made in a coarse clay, and being of a simple open jar shape. Two vessels have been further investigated so far to identify their composition, form and origin. One of the vessels would have been fairly large and shaped like a tall flowerpot with a small flattened rim. This vessel dated to the final century or two BC, or possibly the earlier part of the first century AD. A second vessel investigated was poorly preserved and its shape could not be reconstructed. However, similarities between the clays used to make the two vessels indicate that the two are likely to be of similar dates.



Plan view of a cremation in A13, viewed looking north-west

6 PHASE 4 – LATE IRON AGE TO EARLY ROMAN

During Phase 4 of site activity, an extensive east to west aligned boundary ditch was constructed, which was impressive in its scale and would have been a dominant feature in the landscape. This ditch extended across the centre of the earlier cremation cemetery and had truncated several of the burials present. To the south of the boundary was a single round house, surrounded by a smaller rectangular ditch. Enclosures of probable agricultural function were established to the north and south of the boundary ditch, with smaller areas defined to either side of the round house and a large rectilinear space laid out to the north.



Section of Phase 4 boundary ditch, looking north-east

The settlement attributed to Phase 4 was complex, with multiple stages of reuse, development and reorganisation apparent throughout. In particular, the boundary ditch had been well-maintained for an extended period of time and had been evidently cleaned out and re-cut in subsequent episodes.



Intersection showing several re-cuts of a small enclosure ditch, looking south

7 PHASE 5 - ROMAN

Following the disuse of the east to west boundary ditch, a large enclosure was created towards the eastern part of Area 13. The enclosure had only survived in a fragmentary form but appeared to have contained several internal features including an L-shaped ditch, drainage gullies and a number of large pits.



Quarter-section of Phase 5 pit located within an enclosure, looking north-west

During the 1st to 2nd century AD, a Roman road now known as Watling Street was constructed, the route of which is followed by the A5 to the west of the site. Occupation areas during this period shifted away from earlier settlement cores to be in closer proximity to the road. The main foci of settlement were investigated during previous excavations by Albion Archaeology in 2016 and the Phase 5 remains within Area 13 likely form part of a larger complex of peripheral features of predominantly agricultural purpose.