

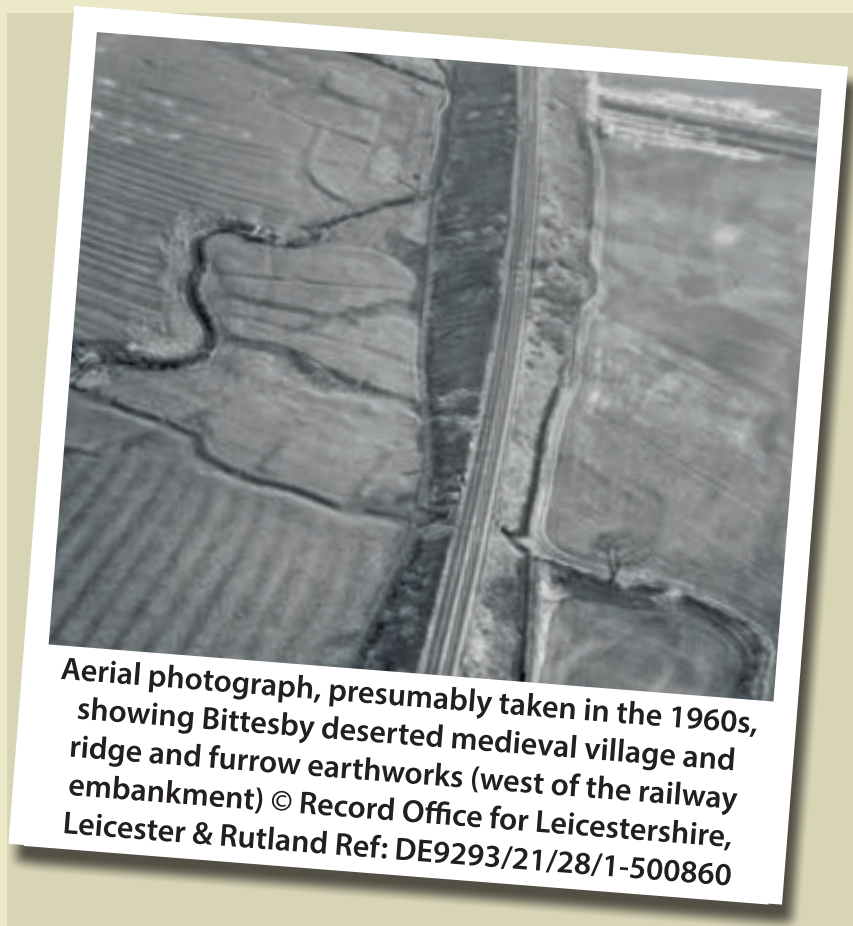
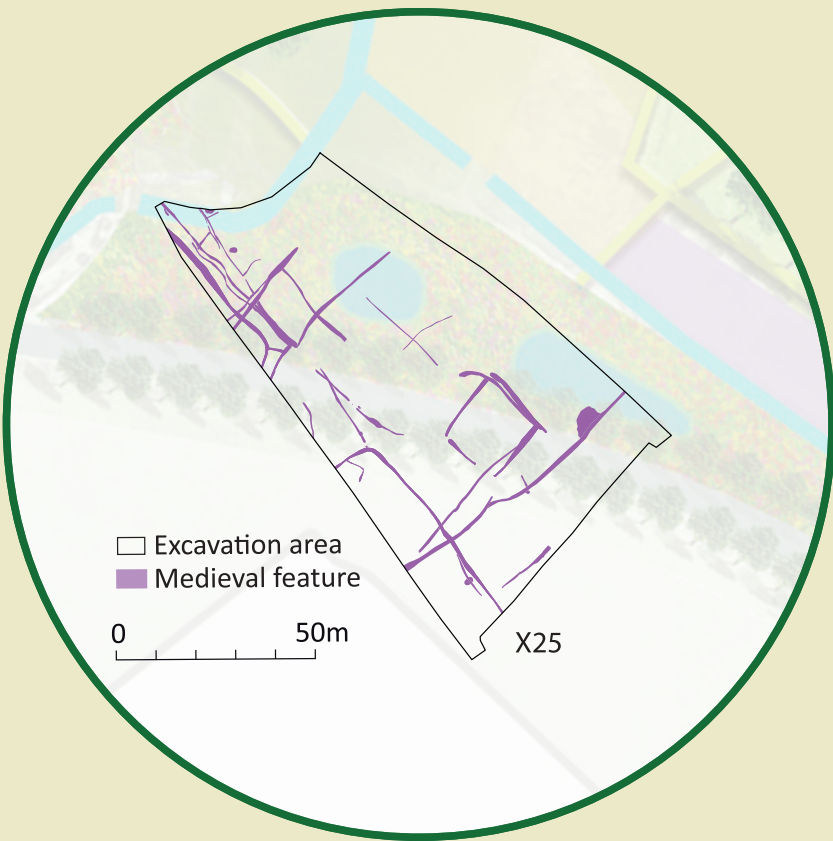
# Bittesby Deserted Medieval Village

This board is located just south of of the abandoned settlement of Bittesby, Archaeologists call this type of settlement a DMV or Deserted Medieval Village. The site of the village has been protected under law as a Scheduled Ancient Monument since 1954 (SAM 1012563). As a Scheduled Ancient Monument it is illegal to disturb the site without permission from Historic England.

Bittesby, originally known as Bischesbie, was part of a Saxon manorial estate, first documented in 1053. The village name derives from the Saxon personal name of Byttel with the Viking Oscan, a word for habitation. Bischesbie was recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086 with a population of 14 households. During the 13th century around 25 families lived in the village and the population did not grow much bigger than this over the next 200 years. In the late 15th century 60 people were evicted from the village and the common ploughed fields were enclosed to form sheep pasture, and by 1622 the village was totally abandoned.

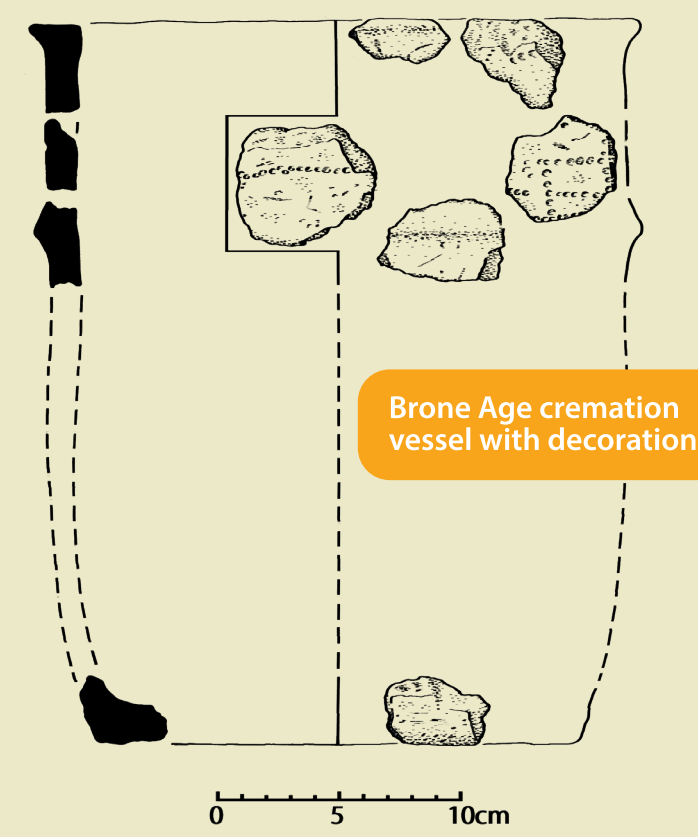
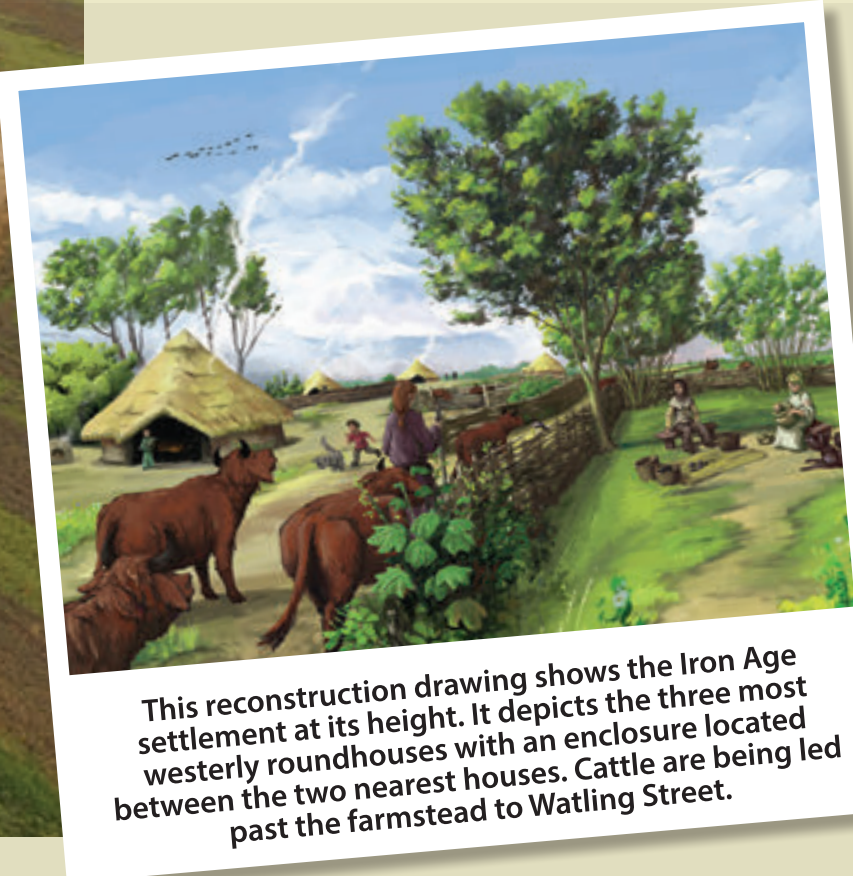
## Ridge and furrow ploughing

Two archaeological excavations were carried out on the outskirts of the medieval village in 2020. Excavation area X25 lay closest to this board, roughly 300m north of here, with area A18 located further to north-west. The archaeological work has shown that the land around the village was intensively farmed, with evidence for paddocks close to the village where animals were kept. Beyond the paddocks evidence was found for extensive Medieval ploughing (ridge and furrow) as shown in the aerial photograph below. The archaeological work here confirms the documentary records indicating the village became smaller and smaller as the landlord evicted villagers to have only sheep farming in the area.



## Bronze Age cremation burials and Iron Age farming

The area of land to the west of this board was ideal for settlement. The east-west aligned ridge was raised above the north-south running streams in the area, creating a dry patch of land to build on. During the recent archaeological dig, the patch of dry ground that makes up Area A15 was investigated.

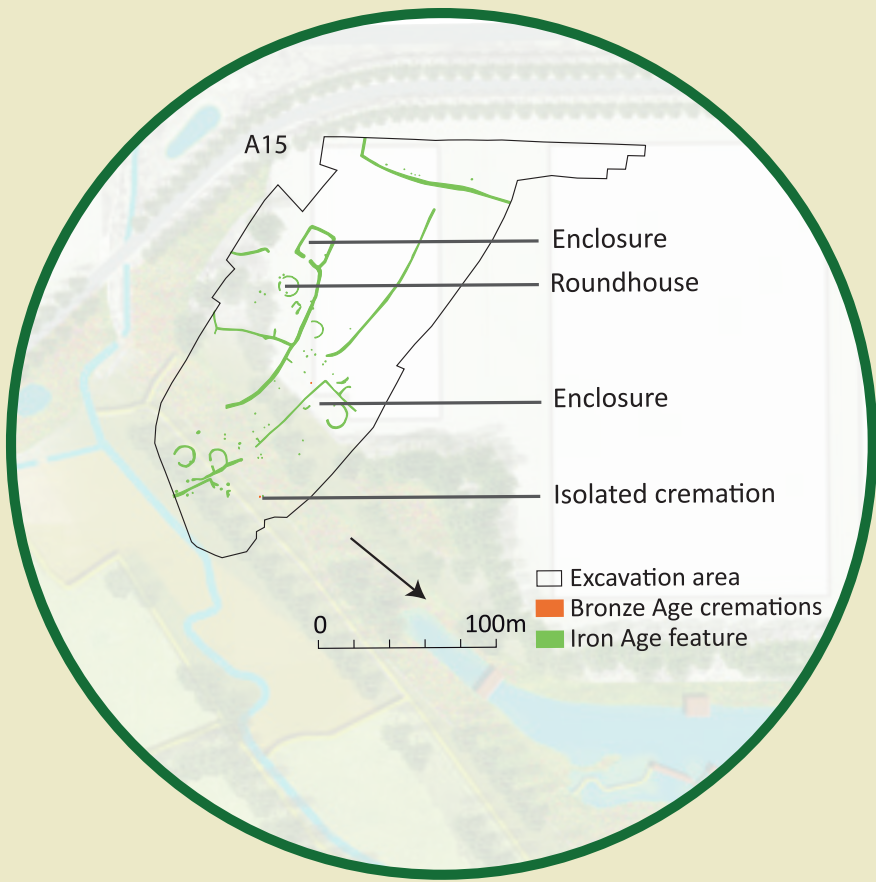


Drone picture of area 15 bounded by the A5 (Watling Street), looking south

The earliest remains found in the area were two isolated Bronze Age burials, which were over 3,000 years old. The burials were located 70m apart and almost 500m south of a much larger Bronze Age cemetery. One of the cremations was placed directly into a small hole. The second cremation was placed inside a handmade pottery vessel decorated with lines of stabbed dots. The pottery vessel was then buried in the ground. The human remains placed inside the urn were radiocarbon dated to between 1492 and 1291 BC.

## Prehistoric Trackway

To the west of Area A15 was a prehistoric trackway, which we now call Watling Street. The route of the modern road, the A5, follows the line of this older trackway. We do not know when Watling Street was built or if the burials are older than the trackway. But we do think the trackway would have been in use when the Iron Age farmstead was built next to it in around 100 BC.



The farmstead found in the A15 dig area consisted of four wooden roundhouses, dating to the late Iron Age, the largest of which had a diameter of 11m. Broken pottery along with sheep and cow bones were found in three of the roundhouses suggesting that people lived in them, the fourth contained no domestic waste and appears to have had a different use. The area continued to be farmed into the Roman period - although the farmers appear to have lived elsewhere locally. Five Iron Age and Roman farmsteads are known within the wider Magna Park site.

