

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
during redevelopment of buildings
adjacent to the Nevill Arms,
Medbourne, Leicestershire
(SP 800 930)**

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for E.F. Hall and Partners

Project Ref:Nevill Arms/95/164

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An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Nevill Arms, Medbourne, Leicestershire (SP 800 930) by Sally Warren.

Summary

An archaeological watching brief during foundation and drainage excavations to buildings adjacent to the Nevill Arms, Medbourne, Leicestershire showed possible evidence of a Roman building and post-medieval activity.

Introduction

The watching brief was undertaken as part of planning conditions connected with the redevelopment of buildings to the north and north west of the Nevill Arms, Medbourne, Leicestershire (SP 800 930; Planning application no.95/164).

The Nevill Arms is a public house situated in the village of Medbourne, (Fig. 1) which lies on the projected line of the Roman Gartree Road, c.12 miles (20 kilometres) south east of Leicester. Many substantial Roman remains such as a villa site, mosaic floors and coin hoards have been found in Medbourne village and its surrounding area. It is believed that Medbourne may have been the location of a Roman small town (Liddle 1994). The Sites and Monuments Record records a Roman villa (79 SE. A) immediately to the north of the development area. The underlying geology consists of Lower Liassic Clays.

Aims and Methods

The aim of the work was to ascertain whether any archaeological deposits were present and whether they would be destroyed by the foundation work. Any deposits encountered would be recorded as appropriate. The work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) standard and guidelines for archaeological watching briefs. The site was visited on the 5th and 6th of June 1996 as the work progressed. The trench cutting (hand dug) was observed and the spoil searched.

Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was a drainage trench situated c.1.75m to the south of, and running parallel to, the buildings to be redeveloped (Fig.2). The trench was dug to a depth of c.0.40m and was 0.45m wide and 18.50m in length. At its western end (Fig.3. Plan 1, Section 4) stone footings were found at c.0.23m below context 1, a dark greyish brown rubble and top soil deposit. A piece of tegula (Roman roof tile) was found in this layer. Some stones were removed to reach the required depth of c.0.40m and the trench was widened at its northern end by 0.15m to accommodate the drain connector. This revealed context 2, a brown, silty clay layer containing charcoal and mortar fragments. A large piece of lime plaster was found in section. On removal of the stones, two pieces of Roman tesserae (one 23mm square) were found along with a small fragment of bone. The yellowish brown clay natural substratum was revealed at a depth of 0.29m. At 10.20m east of Section 4, more stone was revealed at a depth of 0.38m, below a yellowish brown silty clay (Plan 3, Section 3 of archive sheets).

Trench 2

Trench 2 was a foundation trench for an internal wall within the building to be redeveloped. It measured 0.50m wide, 3.60m in length and had a depth of 1m. Its north east facing section consisted of 0.25m of yellowish sand and decayed sandstone, context 3, in which three sherds of post medieval pottery were found. Below this was context 4, 0.40m of a dark greyish brown silty clay with charcoal, brick and mortar fragments present. Two sherds of post medieval pottery and two bone fragments were recovered from this layer. Beneath this context, 0.35m of the natural substratum was revealed. The north west facing section showed the extent of the footings to the building, to a depth of 0.90m overlying the natural substratum.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was a drainage trench to the north and north west of the building, measuring 0.35m wide, 17m in length and 0.30m in depth. It consisted of 0.30m of very dark greyish brown top soil containing brick, charcoal and mortar fragments.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was a foundation trench for an internal wall measuring 0.50m wide, 1.80m in length and 1m in depth. It consisted of 0.10m of decayed sandstone above 0.19m of dark greyish brown to yellowish brown clay loam. This sealed 0.71m of the yellow clay natural substratum.

Conclusion

Although Trench 1 revealed evidence of possible stone footings, the nature of this structure is unclear. The presence of footings, Roman roof tile and tesserae may indicate a stone building of this period, perhaps associated with the nearby villa site, although no clearer dating evidence was present. One of the tesserae was of larger size which might suggest a later Roman (3rd - 4th century) date. Trenches 2 and 4 also included material which could be interpreted as construction debris although the pottery from Trench 2 might suggest a post medieval date for some of this activity. Further work connected with this development proposed for 1997 may provide additional information on the nature of these archaeological deposits.

Archive

The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service under accession number A116 1996. It consists of site notes, colour transparency slides, 2 annotated plans, 4 context sheets and 2 section/plan sheets. The finds retained consisted of 3 fragments of bone, 5 post medieval pot sherds, 2 pieces of tesserae and 1 fragment of tegula.

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Sally Warren 13.11.96

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Fig.1 Location plan



Plate 1 Western extent of Trench 1 viewed from the south, showing stone footings



Plate 2 Western extent of Trench 1 viewed from the east.

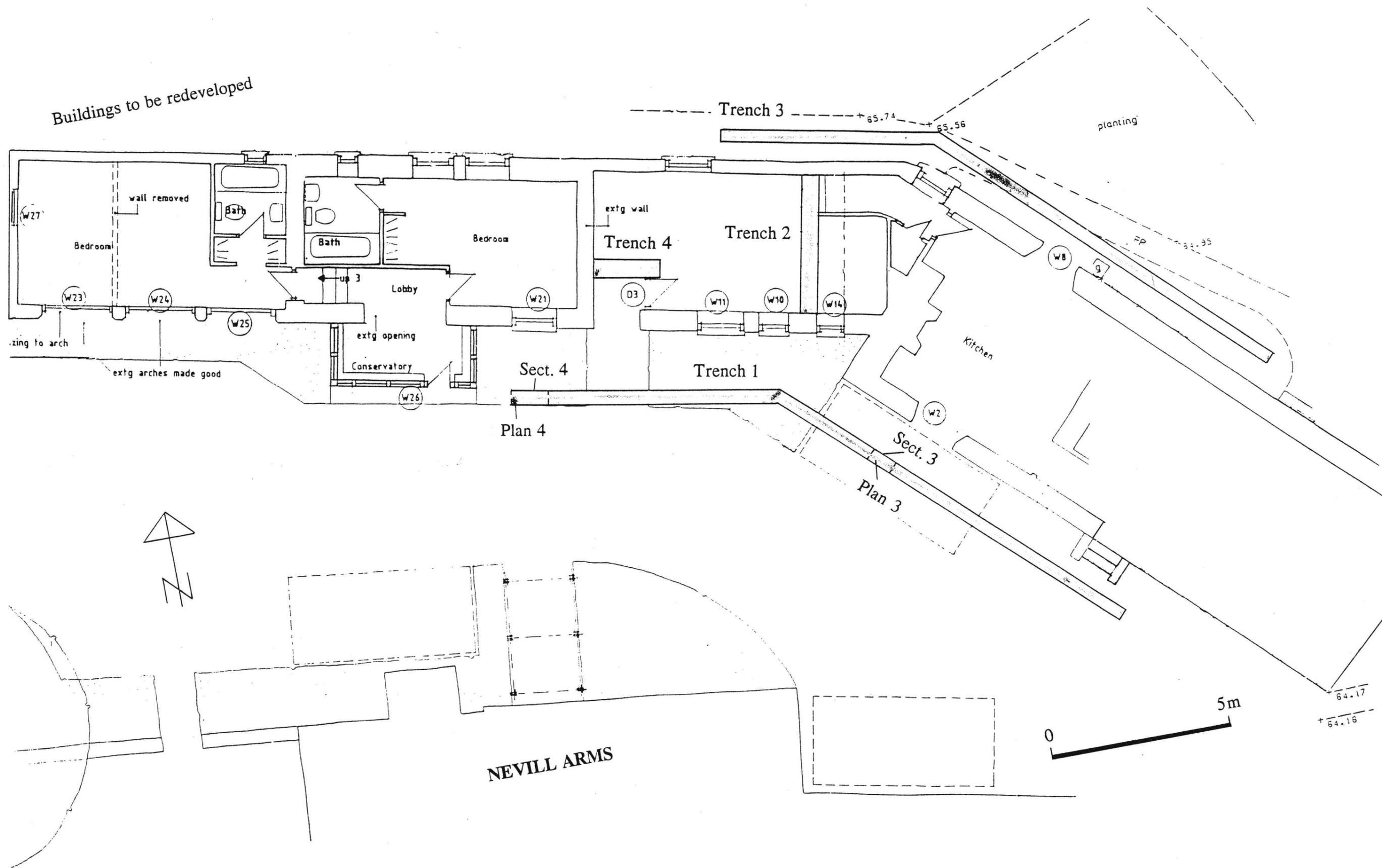


Fig.2 Location of archaeological observations

Plan 1



Section 4

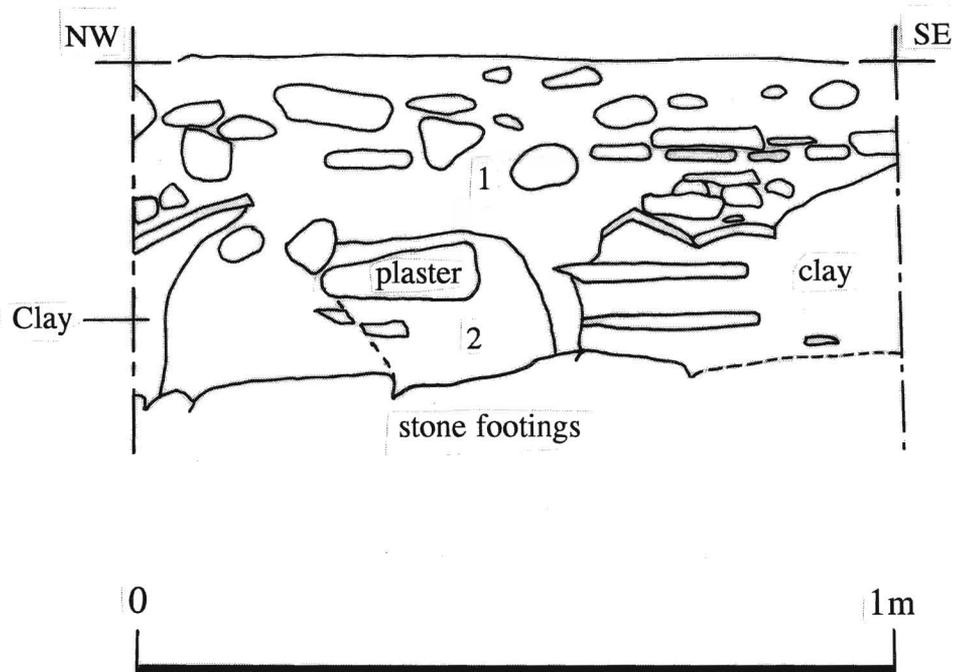


Fig.3 Plan 1, Section 4