

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION OF WALL TRENCHES AT NO. 3 CASTLE HILL, CASTLE DONINGTON LEICESTERSHIRE, 2007





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A report for Mr T. Brooks and Mr N. Owen

by Peter Webb

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1. Summary

- **Background.** This excavation was carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) on behalf of Messrs. Tony Brooks and Nicholas Owen, in connection with the construction of an extension to the rear of No. 3 Castle Hill, Castle Donington, Leicestershire. The site is located within Scheduled Ancient Monument No.17096, the area of a medieval castle earthwork.
- **Proposed scheme.** The client had proposed to demolish the existing extension to the rear of the property and replace it with a new one, measuring c. 7m x 3.3m in plan. In preparation of this a small evaluation test-pit was excavated by TPA in July 2007 to ascertain the nature of the ground close to the extension. This was followed in July 2006 by the excavation by TPA of two foundation trenches for the new extension.
- Archaeological context. The site lies within the former medieval castle. The castle outer earthworks have been levelled in the vicinity of the site, since at least the early 20th century.
- **Method.** With most of the existing extension already removed, trenches 0.6m wide and 3.3m and 7.8m long were excavated by hand to a depth of 1.2m along the lines of the proposed foundation trenches for the new extension. The aim of the excavation was to ensure that no *in situ* archaeology would be destroyed by the construction of the extension and that all archaeological evidence was recorded or recovered.
- **Results.** Dating from associated pottery suggests that the uppermost 1.0m of the excavation was deposited no earlier than the late post-medieval period, perhaps as part of landscape preparation for the house construction and its later enlargements. The lower layers, which extended beneath the excavation depth, contained demolition debris from a stone-walled and stone-roofed building, of uncertain date, along with some13th century pottery.

2. **Project background**

Trent & Peak Archaeology was contracted by Messrs. Tony Brooks and Nicholas Owen to carry out an evaluation at No. 3 Castle Hill, Castle Donington, Leicestershire, in connection with the proposed construction of an extension to the property. The site lies at NGR SK 447 275 (Fig. 1). It contains part of an access road, outbuildings and a single brick house, probably of 18th century date, extended later at both ends and with a small modern extension to the rear. Behind the house lies an extensive garden sloping steeply down to the west.

The site is located within Scheduled Ancient Monument no. 17096, a medieval castle earthwork (Fig. 2). The castle was originally constructed by Eustace, Baron of Haulton circa AD1150 (Curtis 1831:40), but was destroyed by King John whilst it was under the ownership of John Lacy in 1216 (Richardson and Everingham 2005:479). It was, however, rebuilt by Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln (Curtis 1831:40), around AD1290, but by 1565 it was in a state of disrepair, before finally being demolished in 1595.

(Ref: <u>http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/search/fr.cfm?RCN=NMR_NATINV-315372</u>).

An initial evaluation test-pit, 1m x 1m in size, was excavated in July 2007 in the north-west corner of the proposed extension to establish whether the strip footings for the new building would cut into significant archaeological deposits. Towards the bottom of this test-pit the lower contexts appeared to be a possible dumped deposit that extended below the 1.2m depth of the excavated area.

Several months later the clients had demolished the existing rear extension to the property and were intending to replace it with a slightly larger new one, measuring c. 7m x 3.3m in plan. The project design was approved by Richard Clark, Senior Planning Archaeologist Leicestershire County Council, and Angela Simco, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage, on condition that the necessary excavations for the new structure were hand-dug by trained archaeologists. The Local Authority Building Inspector had expressed the view that strip footings excavated to 1.2m below ground, if dug into suitable load-bearing deposits, would be an acceptable design.

The purpose of the second phase of the excavation (TPA site code CHC.2) was to identify whether any significant archaeological remains existed within the full extent of wall trenches for the proposed extension.

3. Method

The work consisted of the excavation and recording of trenches extending away from the original 1m-square test pit, excavated earlier in the north-west corner of the proposed new building. This extension was positioned to take in the complete foundations for the new building, and as such extended 3.3m to the east, towards the western wall of the current standing building, and 7.8m to the south. This was carried out by Richard Parker and Peter Webb on 1st and 2nd November 2007.

The first trench was extended from the still open test-pit, measuring in total 3.3m east to west, by 0.6m north to south. It was positioned using the northern edge of the test pit as the section to be continued, and a line was extrapolated from this to the western wall of the current standing building. This trench was then excavated to a depth of 1.2m using mattock, spade and trowel, with a clean up being carried out at each change in context to avoid misattribution of finds, and to check for features.

Along the north – south line of the proposed extension the foundation trench incorporated the foundation trench of the external steps to the current building. These had already been removed, with the foundations going to a depth of 1m at the southern end of the trench, and 0.8m at the northern end. This trench was simply dug deeper to the depth of 1.2m, with an extension of 1.4m to the north to connect it to the test-pit. The width of this trench was also 0.6m. An existing trench from the southwest corner of the removed building (that had contained its foundations) was to be reused for the new structure; it was badly disturbed and was left untouched as it was already at the required depth for the new extension.

The east facing section of the north-south trench (Fig. 4), and south facing section of the east-west trench (Fig. 5) were then drawn to provide a record of the contexts present.

4. **Results**

Twelve distinct stratigraphical contexts were identified within the trenches, here numbered in sequence 0001 to 0012 (see Figs 3 and 4):

- 0001: Soft dark brown silty loam.
- 0002: Soft mid to dark brown slightly clayey silt with 1% tiny (<1cm) rounded stone inclusions.
- 0003: Soft light yellowish brown silty sand with 2% small (<2cm) angular stone Inclusions.
- 0004: Soft mid yellowish brown silty sand with 2% tiny (<1cm) angular stone inclusions.
- 0005: Friable soft mid brown slightly clayey sand with 5% small (<2cm) rounded and angular stone inclusions.
- 0006: Loose friable light to mid yellowish brown slightly clayey sand with 80% large (10cm+) angular stone inclusions and 5% large mortar lumps. Some voids were present within the deposit, between the stones. This is a dumped deposit relating to the demolition of a building or other structure.
- 0007: Soft red slightly clayey sand with 90% large and very large (>10cm) angular sandstone blocks, some with lime mortar attached. This is a dumped deposit relating to the demolition of a building or structure.
- 0008: Firm red clay with 50% large and very large (>10cm) angular sandstone blocks with lime mortar attached.
- 0009: Firm yellowish red silty clay with 50% medium (2-5cm) angular sandstone inclusions.
- 0010: Mid brown slightly clayey silt with 10% tiny (<1cm) rounded and angular stone inclusions.
- 0011: Soft mid brown slightly clayey sand with 15% small (1-2cm) angular stone and 2% charcoal fleck inclusions.
- 0012: Soft red clay with 30% medium (2-5cm) angular sandstone inclusions.

Materials recovered:

Within these contexts a number of artefacts were discovered. These were:

- 0001: 23 pieces of pottery, 8 fragments of brick / tile, 8 fragments of slate, 7 pieces of glass, 4 fragments of bone, 2 fragments of clay pipe stem and 1 unidentified item were found.
- 0002: 54 fragments of pottery, 8 of brick, 1 of bone, 7 pieces of slate, 11 of glass, 2 of clay pipe, 1 of oyster shell and 1 metal button.
- 0003: 16 pieces of pottery, 9 fragments of slate, 2 of glass, 1 of bone, 2 of clay pipe stem and 4 of brick / tile.
- 0004: 3 pieces of slate and 1 other stone fragment.
- 0005: 1 fragment of pottery, 2 of slate, 2 of bone and 1 of flint.
- 0006: 2 pieces of pottery, 10 pieces of slate and 1 of grit stone.
- 0007: 9 pieces of slate and 3 of bone.

0008 to 0012 did not contain any finds other than stone rubble which was not retained. None of it had worked surfaces.

The pottery is described in the following section.

5. Conclusions

The pottery from within context 0001 contained a mixture of body sherds of salt glazed, yellow ware, coarse red earthenware with red glaze and coarse red earthenware with black glaze pottery types, dating from the 18th century through to the 20th century. Context 0002 contained body sherds from blue and white, and white wares dating from the 20th century and earlier, along with the rim of an 18th-19th century salt glaze jar and a rim fragment of a large coarse red ware bowl, and a body sherd from a possibly late 17th century coarse slip ware vessel. There was also a rim sherd of a probable mocha ware plate dating from the 19th century which may have been produced at the nearby Sharpe's pottery (D. Walker pers. comm.). Layer 0003 contained a 17th century black ware body sherd, along with a mixture of 18th-20th century fabric types. This context also contained a fragment of clay pipe stem that may date to the 17th century. The pottery from context 0005 consisted of a single glazed ridged tile, possibly dating from the 13th-14th centuries (L. Elliott pers. comm.). A rim and spout from a wide bodied jug made from a fine fabric with a reduced core, along with a base fragment from a cooking vessel were found in context 0006, both of which have an iron green glaze that suggest that they could be of the Nottingham type dating from the 13th-14th centuries (D. Walker pers. comm.).

Whilst there was only one complete roof slate, this, along with those that were almost complete, suggests that they were generally sub-rectangular in shape, with the more complete examples being around 200mm x 120mm in size. Fifteen of the roof slates show evidence of having circular drilled peg-holes in them, the diameters of which ranged from 7mm to 12mm. These tiles come from a range of slates, including a couple of examples of Swithland slate, whilst some of the tiles also show evidence of torching (L. Elliott pers. comm.). The tile from within contexts 0001 and 0002 appears to contain Welsh slate (R. Sheppard pers. comm.). As the weight of a stone roof affects the pitch of the roof, with heavier ones requiring a lower pitch (Clifton-Taylor 1972:101), it is possible that the building or structure from which these tiles derived had a relatively high pitched roof, as the largest tile recovered measured 220mm x150mm x 15mm (although the deepest was 20mm).

The present standing building probably dated to the later 18^{th} century (with later additions). The upper soil contexts (0001 – 0004) relates to this period and later, based upon the pottery that was contained in them. These upper contexts possibly relate to a phase of landscaping in preparation for the construction of the building, and its later enlargement.

The pottery from within layers 0005 and 0006 suggests a medieval date, and match the conclusions drawn from the evaluation test-pit. The rubble contained within contexts 0006-0007 would appear to be dumped structural debris which included stone slate tiles, mortar, and stone with mortar adhering to them. The small size of the slate tiles also suggests that they were derived from a building(s) with high pitched roof(s).

As with the evaluation test pit no natural ground was found within the 1.2m depth limits of the foundations The lower deposits relate to the likely demolition of one or more stone-built buildings or structures, with stone slate roof(s). From the excavation

of the foundation trenches for the proposed extension it is clear that no intact structural deposits would be affected by the construction work.

6. References

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ILLUSTRATIONS







Figure 2 Plan showing site location and detail traced from Land Registry map (indicating quality of fit), superimposed on a Victoria County History map showing castle earthworks at the beginning of the 20th century.









CHC Castle Hill, Castle Donnington South facing section 1:20 RP/PW November 2007



Plate 1 (above left) Complete slate tile from context 0004. This example measures 190x120x8mm.Plate 2 (above right) Slate tile from context 0007 showing angled edge. This is the largest example recovered, measuring 220x150x15mm.



Plate 3 Slate tiles from context 0006 showing drilled pegholes holes and angled edges



Plate 4 Plan view of north-south trench showing demolition rubble at south end



Plate 5 East end of east-west trench showing wall foundations of current standing building and demolition deposit at bottom of trench



Plate 6 South end of east facing section of north-south trench



Plate 7 Extension trenches in relation to current standing building



Plate 8 Surface of context 0007 demolition rubble