



University of  
**Leicester**

**Archaeological Services**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Knighton Hall, Knighton Road,  
Leicester**

**NGR: SK 599 015**

Tim Higgins



ULAS Report No. 2011-079  
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**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
Knighton Hall, Knighton Road,  
Leicester**

**NGR: SK 599 015**

**Tim Higgins**

**For: University of Leicester Estates and Facilities Management Division**

Approved by

**Signed:**  **Date:** 17 June 2011..

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**ULAS Report Number 2011-079**

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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at Knighton Hall, Knighton Road, Leicester (SK 599 015)**

Timothy Higgins

### **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Knighton Hall, Knighton Road, Leicester (SK 599 015) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between 8th September and 26th November 2010. The work was carried out on behalf of University of Leicester Estates and Facilities Management Division during the installation of new external drains and remedial work inside the grade 2 listed Hall. The work involved supervision and inspection of machine- and hand-excavated trenches for any indication of archaeological activity, and examination of interior wall surfaces stripped of render. The investigation identified possible garden features and a possible early cobbled path during exterior works. Interior remedial work revealed timbers which are likely to be in situ elements of a timber-framed range of late 16th-century date. The site archive will be held by Leicester Museum Service under the accession number A13.2010.*

### **Introduction**

This document constitutes the final report for an archaeological watching brief carried out at Knighton Hall, Knighton Road, Leicester (SK 599 015). The work was carried out on behalf of University of Leicester Estates and Facilities Management Division by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between 8th September and 26th November 2010.

The proposed installation of a new French drain was situated in the driveway and garden to the north and east of the Hall building. The work impacted on a c.215 sq m area of the driveway and garden. Work inside the hall was situated on the ground floor in two rooms at the rear of the building. Knighton Hall is located to the east of Knighton Road and Church Lane on the junction with Chapel Lane in the former village of Knighton, now a suburb of Leicester, c.3.3km south-east of Leicester city centre.

The watching brief was requested by the City Archaeologist in his capacity as archaeological advisor to Leicester City Council's planning authority, in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5: Planning and the Historic Environment 2010).

### **Geology and Topography**

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 156 (Leicester), indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of superficial deposits of Mid-Pleistocene glacial Diamicton Till overlying bedrock deposits of Triassic mudstone belonging to the Penarth Group (BGS 2008). The site lies on a terraced, south-facing slope at c.80m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) with the ground dropping from 82.3m AOD to 78m AOD from north to south across the site.

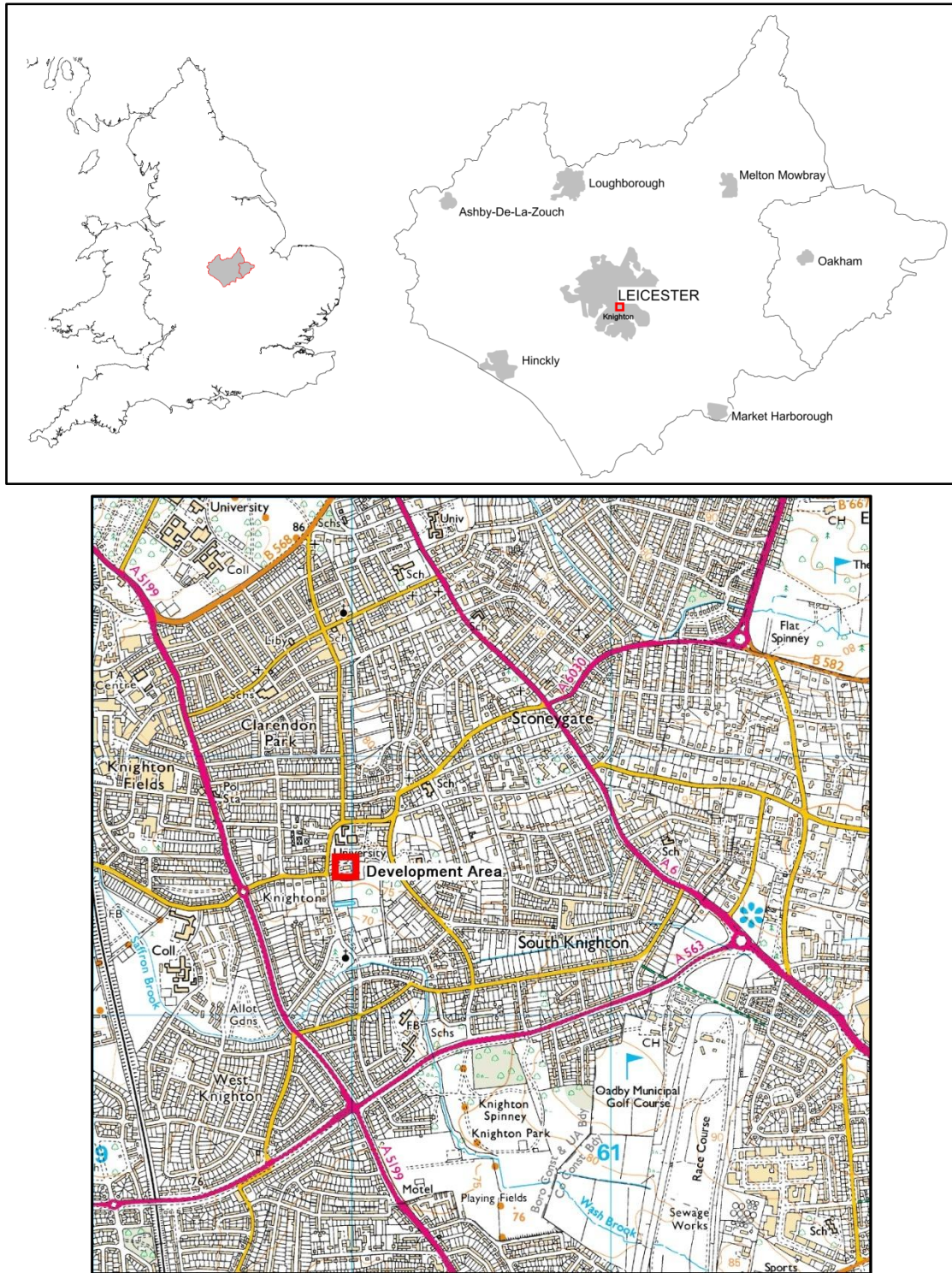


Figure 1. Location Plan

## Historical and Archaeological Background

The Leicester Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the site lies in an area of archaeological interest within the medieval and post-medieval historic settlement core of Knighton Village (MLC1353), which has origins at least as early as the



Domesday survey of 1086. Knighton is recorded as Cnihetone in the Domesday Book suggesting a Royal Manor but held by the Bishop of Lincoln. The place name is fairly common and derives from the Old English 'cniht' and 'ton' meaning the 'farmstead or village of the young men or retainers'.

The Domesday Book states: 'There are 2 parts of 1 hide. There is land for 6 ploughs. There 20 villans with 4 sokemen have 6 ploughs. There are 30 acres of meadow'. (Williams and Martin 2002, 629). In 1719, land in Knighton, including Knighton Hall, was granted to Edmund Cradock of Newark by the Pochin family. By the time of enclosure in 1756, the Cradocks held about 700 acres within the parish. By the early 19th century Knighton parish extended from Victoria Park in the north to the Washbrook in the south and from the line of Saffron Lane in the west to the Gartree Road, Oadby in the east. It bordered the Duke of Rutland's land at Aylestone in the west and Stoughton Grange, the land of the Powys-Keck family in the east. From 1849 the Knighton Estate was held by Edward Cradock Hartopp Grove until his death in 1886, after which time the estate was progressively sold off as building and development plots (Boynton 2003).

The HER records Knighton Hall, noting that the earliest parts date back to 1567 (**MLC1443**) and Pevsner suggests that the early parts are centred on an big fire place, the stone wall of its chimney breast and fragment of star-shaped chimney stack (Pevsner 1992, 274).

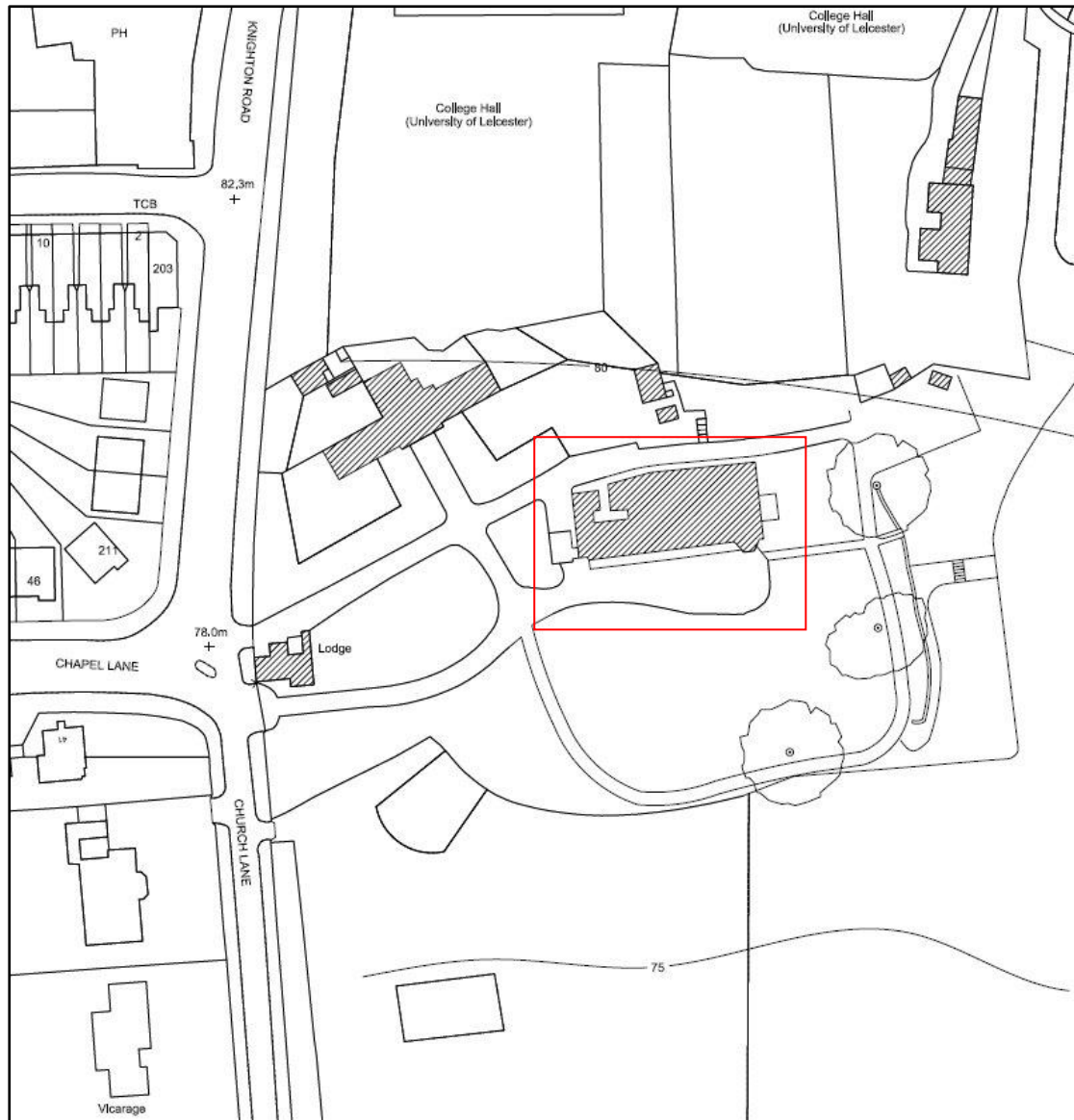


Figure 2. Site Location Plan

### Archaeological Objectives

The principal objectives of the watching brief were:

- To identify the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits or structural remains
- To establish the character, extent and date of any archaeological deposits or structural remains to be affected by the proposed works.
- To excavate and record any archaeological deposits or structural remains to be affected by the proposed works.
- To produce a report and archive of any results.

### Methodology

The project required a professional archaeologist to inspect all groundwork likely to impact upon any archaeological remains.

The work involved the supervision and inspection of machine and hand-dug trenches in order to identify any archaeological deposits or the natural substratum. Where possible, this was carried out using a mini 360° mechanical excavator with a 0.3m toothed bucket. All exposed areas, sections and existing spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. Archaeological deposits were hand cleaned, planned, photographed and sample excavated as appropriate to addressing the objectives of the watching brief. Field notes were recorded on pro-forma ULAS watching brief recording forms whilst any stratigraphic units would be given a unique context number and recorded on pro-forma ULAS context sheets if deemed appropriate.

All work followed the *Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS)*.

## Results

### External Ground-works

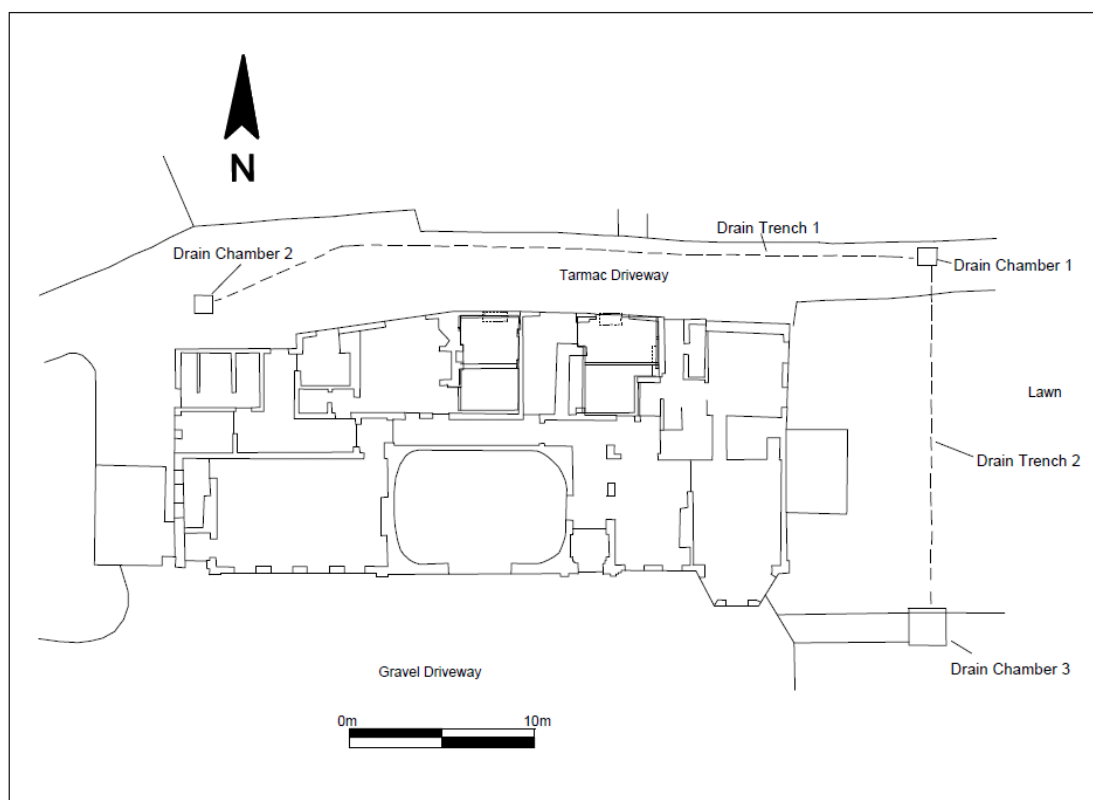


Figure 3. Location of external drain trenches and access drain chambers





Plate 1. Drain Chamber 1 looking north east

### **Drain Chamber 1 (Figure 3)**

#### **Dimensions**

1.20m square and 1.30m deep

Access drain chamber 1 was located at the rear of Knighton Hall on the east side of the tarmac drive. The natural clay was reached at a depth of 0.80m below the surface and comprised dark greyish-pinkish-brown silty clay with mottled bands of pale bluish-grey clay. On the south side of the chamber was a wall foundation, two courses high and a single brick wide, resting on the natural clay. The wall foundation was orientated north-east to south-west and probably supported a garden wall. A cobbled surface was also seen resting on the natural and comprised frequent small well-rounded pebbles concreted within a dark greyish-brown clayey-silt matrix for 0.10m deep. The cobbles were sealed by a layer of greyish-brown clay silt 0.22m thick. Overlying was another layer 0.20m deep consisting of coarse greyish-orange sand, which was sealed by very dark clay silt 0.18m thick containing an abundant quantity of charcoal, crushed brick and mortar. Above was a layer of gravel hardcore supporting a tarmac surface with a combined depth of 0.10m.



Plate 2. Drain Trench 1 looking east

### **Drain Trench 1 (Figure 3)**

#### Dimensions

0.30m wide and 1.30m deep

Drain Trench 1 was excavated along the tarmac pavement at the rear of the property and connected Chambers 1 and 2. The stratigraphic sequence was broadly similar to that first observed in Drain Chamber 1 and the early cobble surface found overlying the natural was observed running the full length of the trench. . A change in the sequence was a second more recent cobble surface found directly below the tarmac pavement. This had been laid on a 0.34m deep layer of fine pale pinkish-orange coarse sand. Towards the west end of the trench, the second cobble surface and coarse sand disappeared and was replaced with a loose grey-brown clay silt gravel layer mixed with building rubble and cobbles. This layer was thought to have been perhaps disturbance associated with the landscaping of the gardens at the rear of the building.

### **Drain Chamber 2 (Figure 3)**

#### Dimensions

1.20m square and 1.30m deep

Access Drain Chamber 2 was excavated towards the west end of the tarmac path at the rear of the building. There was no change to the stratigraphic sequence that had been observed at the west end of Drain Trench 1. The lower early cobble surface overlying the natural was still present at 0.86m below the surface.



Plate 3. Drain Chamber 3 looking west

### **Drain Chamber 3 (Figure 3)**

#### **Dimensions**

2.10m square and 2.70m deep

Access Drain Chamber 3 was located on the east side of the building towards the southern end of a garden lawn. The natural clay was reached at depth of 0.70m below the surface and was sealed by a 0.40m thick layer of subsoil which comprised brown clay silt mixed with occasional pebble and was heavily disturbed by root action. Overlying was a layer of garden soil 0.30m deep consisting of dark grey clay silt, which had been cut by a modern land drain. Finds found within the topsoil comprised a modern pottery sherd, glass bottle end and what appeared to off cuts from bone button manufacture (see Appendix 2 and 3 below).



### **Drain Trench 2 (Figure 3)**

#### Dimensions

0.30m wide 1.40m deep

This trench was located on the east side of the property running north to south through a lawn and connecting Chambers 1 and 3. Towards the northern end of the trench the natural clay was reached at depth of 0.50m below the surface. Overlying natural was a 0.30m thick layer of subsoil which comprised brown clay silt mixed with occasional pebble and natural clay inclusions. The subsoil was sealed by a layer of garden soil 0.20m deep that consisted of dark greyish clay silt. Towards the middle of the trench a possible garden terrace cut was visible running west to east and changed the stratigraphic sequence. The feature comprised a near-vertical south-facing slope cut through the natural to a depth 0.50m. The terrace cut had a large flat piece of Swithland slate inserted as edging against the vertical terrace cut. The terrace cut contained an infill consisting of soft grey-brown silty clay mixed with natural red clay, cobbles and modern brick rubble 0.30m deep. Overlying was the same subsoil layer first observed in the northern half of the trench which now had a depth of 0.50m, but the topsoil above had the same depth of 0.20m.

### **Internal Remedial Works (Figure 4)**

Internal remedial works were carried out which involved installation of new foundations to underpin walls within two of the ground-floor rooms located at the rear of the Hall and stripping of defective plaster from walls. The archaeological work involved inspection of three small hand excavated trenches and examination and recording of interior wall surfaces stripped of plaster.

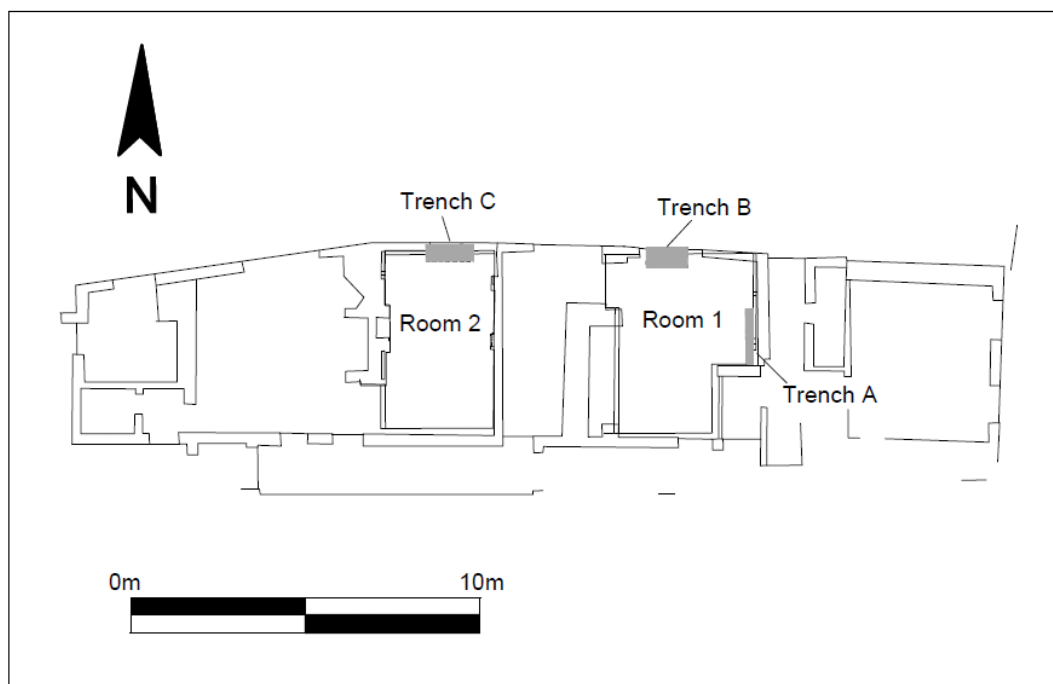


Figure 4. Location plan of Internal Remedial Foundation trenches

### **Internal Remedial Foundation Trenches**

#### **Foundation Trench A Room 1 (Figure 4)**

##### Dimensions

Length 1.20m, 0.40m wide, 0.40m deep

Trench A was located within Room 1 towards the centre of the east internal wall. A small rectangular trench was excavated under the wall and the natural clay was reached at a depth of 0.20m. Sealing the natural was a layer of crushed stone gravel 0.10m deep which supported a modern concrete floor 0.10m thick. Early brickwork and timber elements were exposed when plaster was removed from the wall. The early brick wall was supported by a brick foundation 0.20m deep.

#### **Foundation Trench B Room 1 (Figure 4)**

##### Dimensions

Length 1.20m, 0.40m wide, 0.40m deep

Trench B was also located within Room 1 towards the centre of the southern external wall. A small rectangular trench was excavated under the wall and natural clay was reached at a depth of 0.20m. Overlying the natural was crushed stone gravel 0.10m deep which supported a 0.10m thick modern concrete floor. Modern brickwork was exposed in the wall which had a foundation blue bricks 0.20m deep.



## Foundation Trench C Room 2 (Figure 4)

### Dimensions

Length 1.20m, 0.40m wide, 0.40m deep

Trench C was located within Room 2 towards the centre of the south external wall. A small rectangular trench was excavated under the wall and natural clay was reached at a depth of 0.30m below the floor surface. Overlying the natural clay was crushed brick stone gravel 0.22m deep and sealed by a modern concrete floor 0.08m thick. Early brickwork was exposed in the wall and had a foundation which comprised stone rubble 0.30m wide and 0.20m deep.

## Internal walls (Figure 5)

The removal of plaster from internal wall faces exposed fragments of timber framing in Rooms 1 and 2. Other exposed timbers included ceiling beams in both rooms and a fireplace bressumer in Room 1. The location of all of these timbers was recorded (Figure 5) and each timber was allocated a number (T1 – T13).

### Room 1

Elements of an early timber-framed wall were exposed beneath later lath and plaster in the east wall of Room 1. Framed into a sill beam (T1) are two studs (T2 and T3). The studs are tenoned into the sill and the joints pegged (Plate 4 and Figure 5).

Timber T4 is a chamfered spine beam supporting the first floor joists over Room 1. The west end of T4 is carried on the fireplace bressumer T6. The bressumer spans the opening of a substantial inglenook fireplace heating Room 1, which has two recessed cupboards (without doors) and a later brick hearth. Timber T5 is a beam at ceiling level in the south wall of Room 1, presumably part of a timber-framed wall (Plate 5 and Figure 5).

### Room 2

Within Room 2, T7 is a beam at ceiling level that presumably represents a vestige of a timber-framed north wall. Timber T8 is a spine beam supporting the first floor joists over Room 2. Various elements of a timber wall frame were exposed in the west wall of Room 2. Timbers T10 and T12 are beam fragments exposed at ceiling level, whilst T11 is the remains of a stud. At the north-west corner of the room, T13 appears to mark the position of a removed wall posts (Plate 6 and Figure 5). T9 is possibly a reset fragment supporting the wall above the wide entrance from Room 2 into the kitchen to the west.

All of the timbers were oak and all, with the exception of T9, appear to be *in situ* elements of a timber-framed range of building. From the limited investigation afforded by the remedial works, it is not possible to interpret with confidence the form of the timber-framed structure represented by the exposed timbers. It is probable that further elements are concealed within the fabric of the building. More detailed investigation may serve to elucidate the form and date of the remaining early fabric.

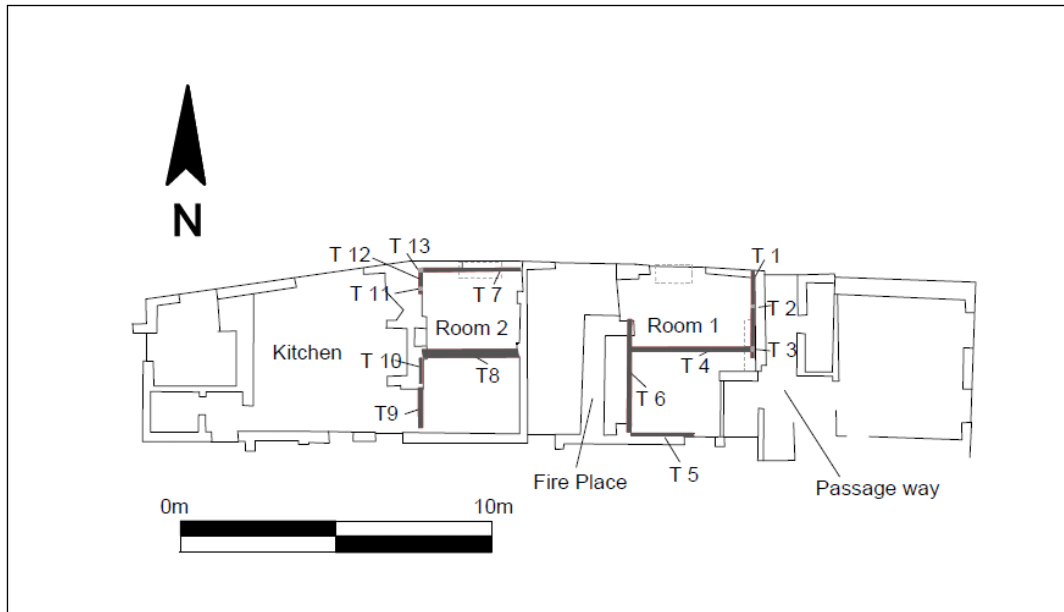


Figure 5. Location plan of timber elements found within Rooms 1 and 2 located at the rear of Knighton Hall.



Plate 4. Room 1, west wall. Sill beam T1 and studs T2 and T3, partially obscured by later studwork to lath and plaster wall covering.



Plate 5. Room 1, looking south-east, showing the spine beam T4 supported on the fireplace bressumer T6.



Plate 6. Room 2, looking south-west, showing the spine beam T8 at ceiling level and remnants of wall framing T10, T11 and T12 embedded in the brickwork of the west wall of Room 2.

## Discussion

A possible early cobble path was seen running east to west within drain trench 1 and drain chambers 1 and 2. Although no dating evidence was found associated with this cobble path it was overlying the natural clay and was sealed by later layers and another cobbled surface, which suggests perhaps an early road or track running behind Knighton Hall. Various possible garden features are represented by a second cobble path found within drain trench 1, a possible garden terrace cut seen in drain trench 2 and garden wall foundation in chamber 1.

All of the timbers recorded in Rooms 1 and 2, with the exception of T9, are likely to be *in situ* elements of a timber-framed range of building. In the *Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* Pevsner suggests a late 16th-century date for the core of Knighton Hall (Pevsner 1992, 274). The timber-framing recorded during this phase of work would be consistent with such a date. Early brickwork exposed in various places within the same rooms could be as early as the late 16th century or may be 17th century in date. More detailed investigation would be required in order to characterise this early fabric evidence.

Amongst finds found within the external works were off cuts and waste of animal bone, thought to be from button manufacture (see Appendix 3 below). These off cuts and waste have been encountered before within the gardens of Knighton Hall and are believed to be waste from large-scale machine manufacture of buttons and probably date from the mid 19th century. It is believed that the animal bone fragments may have been mixed with a consignment of manure that was imported into the garden and



were perhaps sourced from one of two known 19th century button manufactures based in Leicester (P. Courtney pers. comms).

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## **Archive**

The site archive consists of:  
9 A4 watching brief record form  
3 A2 Plan and Section drawing sheets  
71 digital photographs

The archive will be held by Leicester Museum Service under the accession number A13.2010.

## **Publication**

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York (Appendix 1).

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal, the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, in due course

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks are extended to the client and the contractors for their co-operation and assistance on site. Fieldwork was undertaken Mathew Morris and Tim Higgins, and the report written by Tim Higgins with contributions from Jennifer Browning, Neil Finn and Deborah Sawday. The project was managed for ULAS by Richard Buckley.



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16/05/2011

**Appendix 1: OASIS Database entry**

Project Name	Knighton Hall, Knighton Road, Leicester
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Mathew Morris and Tim Higgins
Previous/Future work	None
Current Land Use	Garden/Driveway/House
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition, listed building
Site Co-ordinates	SK 599 015
Start/end dates of field work	8/9/2010 – 26/11/2010
Archive Recipient	Leicester Museum Service
Study Area	215 square metres

**Appendix 2: The Pottery & Miscellaneous Finds.**

*Deborah Sawday*

**The Finds**

The results are shown below (Table 1).

**The Pottery**

The pottery, one sherd, weighing 35 grams, was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research group, (MPRG, 2001) and the ULAS fabric series (Sawday 1989), (Davies and Sawday 1999). The pottery, probably part of an internally glazed jar, in post medieval or modern earthenware, was found in context (1).

**The Miscellaneous Finds**

The base of a blown cylindrical wine bottle with a kick up and a pontil mark under the base, where the glass was broken off the pontil rod after the final stage of manufacture, was also recovered from context (1). The evidence suggests a date from c.1735 for this fragment.

Initially, wine was consumed in small quantities, much like a liqueur, beer or ale being used to quench ones' thirst. Prior to 1640 wine was kept in stoneware flasks called bartmans or bellarmine, but sometime around this date the English glass makers began to develop thick walled dark green globular bottles with a rounded base. These rather unstable bottles had to be stored the right way up and it was only the advent of developments such as the invention of the corkscrew and tight fitting corks to exclude oxygen that made it possible to store wine over a period of time. By

c.1735 wine bottles had become thinner and the cylindrical shape that we are familiar with today was developed to allow the bottles to be stored on their side. From then on the possibility of laying down bottles of wine in cellars to mature became a reality.

Part of an oyster shell occurred in the same context.

## Conclusions

The earthenware EA2 is ubiquitous throughout the city and county in post-medieval and modern contexts. In terms of the remaining finds, the author has previously noted wine bottles of a somewhat earlier date than that found here, at Shawell Hall. It seems possible that both may have been associated with the fine dining which would no doubt have been enjoyed by the occupants of both establishments.

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Table 1: The medieval and later pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams) by context.

Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos.	Grams	Comments
<b>POTTERY</b>				
1	EA2 – Earthenware2	1	35	Wall of internally glazed wheel thrown hollow ware- possibly a jar. Post medieval/modern.
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>				
1	Glass	1	344	Very thick base of a blown wine bottle, with a kick up under the base and a pontil mark where the glass was broken off the pontil rod after the final stage of manufacture. The colour of the glass & the unusually thick base & cylindrical shape suggests a date from c.1735
1	Shell	1		Oyster.

Site/ Parish: Knighton Hall, Knighton, Leicester Accession No.: A13 2010 Document Ref: knighton1.docx Material: pottery & bottle glass Site Type: Hall/Village	Submitter: T. Higgins Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Identification: 205.2011 Method of Recovery: watching brief Job Number: 11-121
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### Appendix 3: The Animal Bones.

#### *Jennifer Browning*

Nine fragments of animal bone were recovered from context 1 (topsoil) at Knighton Hall. A butchered large mammal (probably cattle) lumbar vertebra with un-fused epiphyses was recovered. However, the majority of recovered bones appear to indicate part of a manufacturing process. The fragments were regular in size and shape, consisting of rectangular and square sections, with length/width measurements of between 37mm and 43mm. They appear to have been produced from the thick cortical bone (up to 9mm thick) of the long-bone shafts of large mammals, such as horses or, most probably, cattle. Visible striations showed that each section was sawn and was flat on the inner side, while the un-sawn, convex outer face appears to reflect the natural curve of the bone surface. A circular hole in the centre of each fragment appears to have been punched or drilled out and a projecting ridge towards the inner surface possibly suggests that the bone was punched from both sides. The cut circles are very regular with diameters ranging from 29.5mm to 33.5mm, although most measure between 30mm and 31mm. The regularity of the cut-outs suggests that they may be machine-made and they are likely to represent waste off-cuts from the manufacture of button blanks.



Plate 7. (left): Bone off-cuts. Top row shows outer face and bottom row shows inner face

Plate 8. ( right): Detail of cut-out.

Parallels are known from other towns. Slum courtyard and street frontage terraced housing in Chester (19th and 20th century) produced evidence for button-making consisting of bone fragments with circular cut-outs of the same size as buttons found on the site (Matthews 1999, 168). Similarly, button making was an important 18th and 19th century industry in Birmingham, where buttons were made from bone, metal and shell (Hodder 2004, 140). At the Soho Manufactory bone fragments were recovered with circles cut into them by a stamping machine to create button blanks (Hodder 2004, 140) and both descriptions accord with the evidence from Knighton Hall. However, no finished or spoiled buttons or button blanks were recovered during the work, which supports a suggestion (P. Courtney pers. comm.) that the fragments were imported to Knighton Hall, perhaps for use as bone meal, rather than representing industry taking place at the site.

#### **References**

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