



# University of Leicester

## Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Strip, Plan  
and Sample Excavation at  
The Grange, Main Street,  
Slawston, Leicestershire.  
NGR: SP 7773 9452**

Andrew Hyam



ULAS Report No. 2011-063  
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**An Archaeological Strip, Plan and Sample Excavation  
At The Grange, Main Street, Slawston, Leicestershire**

**NGR: SP 7773 9452**

**Andrew Hyam**

**For: Mr A Smith**

Checked by:

Signed: ...



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**ULAS Report Number 2011-063**

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**Accession Number XA41.2011**

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## **An Archaeological Strip, Plan and Sample Excavation at The Grange, Main Street, Slawston, Leicestershire. NGR: SP 7773 9452**

**Andrew Hyam**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation was undertaken at The Grange, Main Street, Slawston by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services on the 16th and 17th of March 2011. Under planning application number 10/001464/FUL it was proposed that a tennis court will be constructed within a paddock to the rear of Orchard House. In view of the location within an area of archaeological interest and its proximity to the site of a former chapel a strip, plan and sample excavation was requested by the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, as historic environment advisor to the planning authority.*

*The heavily robbed red-brick and ironstone foundation of the chapel and its boundary wall were located in the south-western corner of the site. Elsewhere the paddock had been landscaped in the recent past resulting in the original subsoil and some of the natural substrate being removed prior to this work.*

*The archive will be deposited with the, Leicestershire Museums Services under Accession Number X.A.41.2011*

### **Introduction**

In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, Policy HE12.3 (DCLG 2010), this document forms the report for an archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation at The Grange, Main Street, Slawston, Leicestershire, NGR SP 7773 9452. It is proposed that a tennis court will be constructed on a paddock to the north of Orchard House on land belonging to the Grange. In response to planning application number 10/001464/FUL the Senior Planning Archaeologist (SPA) recommended the need for an archaeological investigation to be undertaken during soil stripping and groundworks. When considering the planning application the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to the local planning authority, recommended the requirement for archaeological work due to the site's location within an area of archaeological interest. The site is located within the historic settlement core of Slawston and close to the site of a non-conformist chapel. The work has been commissioned by the owner, Mr A Smith.

### **Background**

The village of Slawston lies approximately 7km to the north-east of Market Harborough and 9km east of Kibworth Beauchamp (Fig. 1). The village lies on a small south-easterly to north-westerly heading ridge of land. The development site lies on the north side of Main Street which, as its name indicates, is the main street

running from north-west to south-east through the village (Fig. 2). The proposed tennis court is to the north, and rear, of Orchard House which is a modern house dating to the later 20th century and built to the west of The Grange (Fig. 3). The site lies at a height of approximately 97m above OD on an outcrop of Whitby Mudstone Formation.



Figure 1 Slawston location map.

1:50000 Ordnance survey. North to top of map.

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Figure 2 Slawston village

1:25000 Ordnance survey. North to top of map.

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Figure 3 Site map and proposed development  
Supplied by client.

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application site lies in an area of archaeological interest and is inside the medieval and post-medieval historic settlement core of the village of Slawston (HER ref MLE10107). The Roman Gartree Road runs to the south of the village on a north-west to south-east alignment. Of particular significance to the development area is the site of a former non-conformist chapel located on the western border of the plot. The Victoria County Histories indicate that a chapel for Protestant dissenters was built there in 1776. They appear to have been recorded by a number of different names, such as Baptists in 1829 and as Independents by 1833. By 1851 the chapel was said to be neither Independent nor Baptist but attended by Christian nonconformists. The original chapel was rebuilt in 1850 but finally closed in 1933. By 1955 the chapel appears to have been demolished. The chapel is shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey county series map published in 1885 and so is likely to be the 1850 rebuild (Fig. 4). The OS map shows that the chapel occupies a narrow plot of land with walls along each side of the plot set within the south-western corner of a larger field. What appears to be the same ground plan is also shown on the 1904 and 1929 editions although the 1929 edition identifies it as a Union Church. The 1946 1 inch/mile OS

edition also shows a chapel but it has disappeared by the 1961 1:25000 edition which supports the demolition date of 1955.

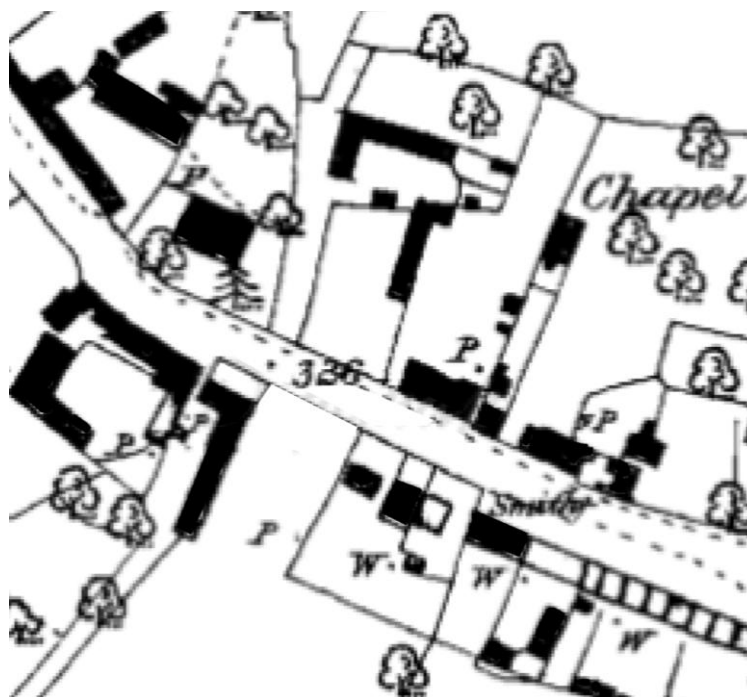


Figure 4 First edition 1885 OS map showing chapel location  
County series 1:25000

The development proposal is to build a new tennis court to the rear of Orchard House and its brick-built garage (Figs. 5 and 6). The site of the court is currently used as a paddock and landscaped garden. Prior to this work the western boundary of the site comprised a red brick wall and a row of mature *Leylandii* trees, while along the northern boundary was a hawthorn hedge, a beech hedge ran along the eastern boundary and a wooden post and rail was to the south. The brick boundary wall extended northwards beyond the rear of the modern garage by approximately 18m before giving way to the row of *Leylandii*. The whole of the proposed tennis court site was covered in turf but appeared to have been landscaped to create a large rectangular depression approximately 0.4m deep running along the length of the site from north to south. The landscaping has left a narrow bank, at original ground height, along the western side of the site. A small wooden summerhouse was also laid on slabs on top of the turf in the south-western corner. A number of modern land drains were known to have been laid across the site within the last 10 to 15 years.

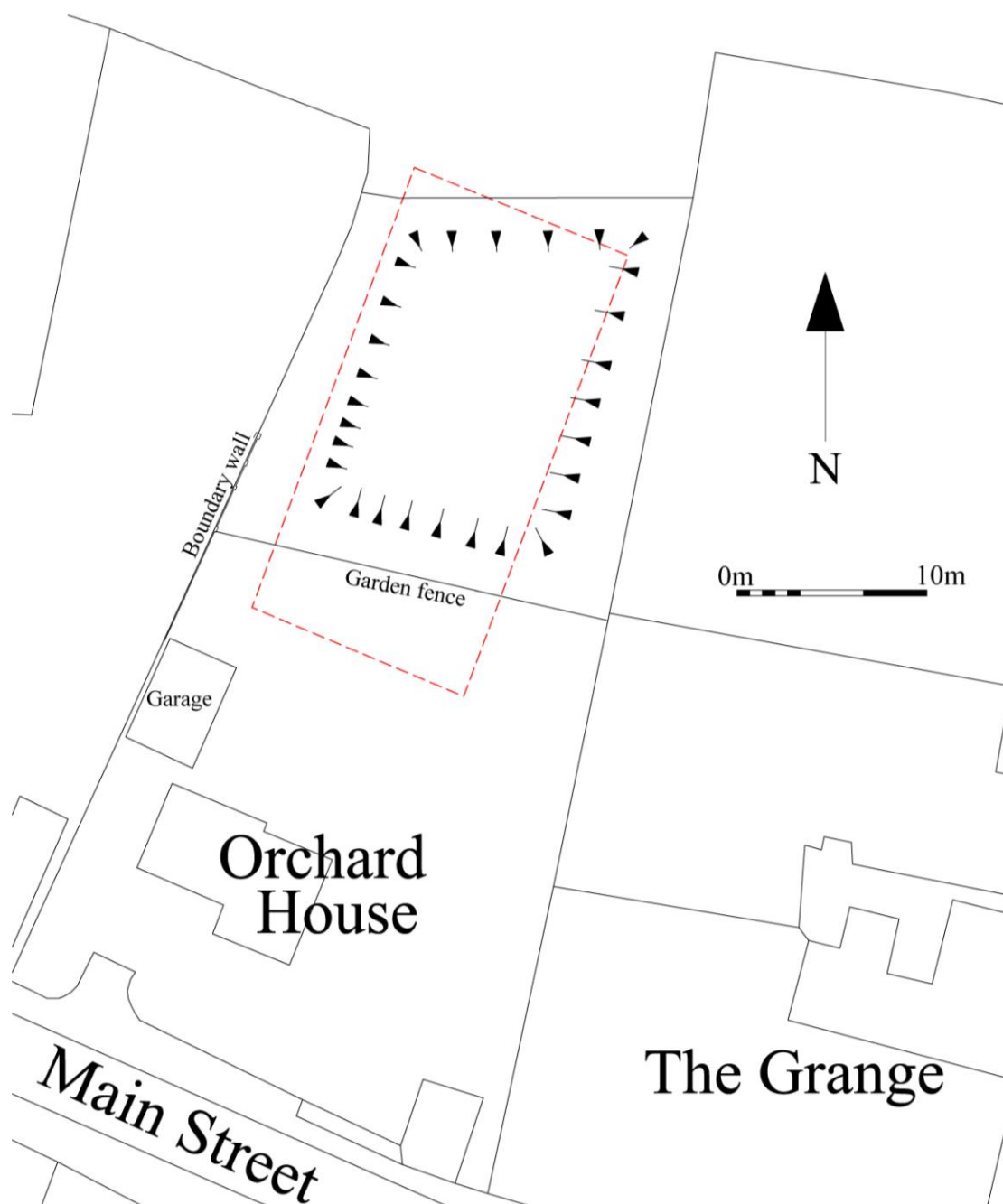


Figure 5 Pre-excitation plan of site showing landscaped depression in centre





Figure 6 Development area  
Looking south. 1m scale

### **Objectives**

Through archaeological controlled stripping and investigation the objectives of the archaeological investigation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

### **Methodology**

The project involved the supervision of overburden removal and other groundworks using a tracked mini-digger fitted with a 0.6m wide ditching bucket and supervised by an experienced professional archaeologist during the works specified in order to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains. Initial trial excavations were undertaken in the south-west corner of the site and in the apparent landscaped depression in order to provide an indication of soil depths and possible depths of archaeological deposits.

Where significant archaeological remains were identified this was followed by a programme of excavation and recording which was undertaken during the course of the groundworks in order to keep interruption to the development work to a minimum.

All archaeological deposits located were hand cleaned and planned as appropriate. Samples of all archaeological deposits located were hand excavated. Measured drawings of all archaeological features were prepared at an appropriate scale and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100. All plans were tied into the National Grid.

Archaeological deposits were excavated and recorded as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence of deposits, recognising and excavating structural evidence and recovering economic, artefactual and environmental evidence. Particular attention was paid to the potential for buried palaeosols and waterlogged deposits in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.

All excavated sections were recorded and drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 scale, levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights were taken where appropriate.

## Results

In order to ascertain the depths of overburden and possible underlying archaeological deposits a small excavation was made in the south-western corner of the paddock on the highest part of the site and at the lowest part of the central depression as mentioned earlier. Stripping back a small portion of the turf and approximately 0.1m of topsoil in the south-west corner revealed the presence of a possible red brick wall line. A second small evaluation strip was made in the lower area of the paddock. In this area removing the turf and approximately 0.1 to 0.15m of topsoil revealed a clean pale brownish yellow clay natural substratum suggesting that the subsoil had been removed at an earlier date.

Careful removal of the turf and remaining topsoil in the south-western corner and along the bank running along the western boundary exposed the top of a rectangular brick structure heading southwards underneath the wooden summer house (Fig. 7). Initial indications were that the structure had an internal width of approximately 5m but with a narrow wall measuring only 0.25 to 0.35m in width. The remainder of the south-west corner was then stripped after the summer house and its base had been dismantled and removed from site. This revealed the full extent of a rectangular brick structure (3) with an internal dimension of 4.96m wide by 9.13m in length (Fig. 8). The red bricks measured 235mm long by 110mm wide by 60mm high and were laid in alternating courses of stretchers and headers creating a narrow and fairly insubstantial wall base. There was some evidence of lime mortar being used to bond the bricks together. A 3.7m length of the eastern wall near to the corner was slightly thicker and had a combination of stretchers and headers laid in the same course although the reason for this is not clear. Wall (3) extended southwards past a brick plinth and wall (5) to a 4m wide gap with cobbles (4) set within, and to the east of, the gap (Fig. 9). The cobbles were only one course thick and were laid directly onto the natural brown-yellow clay substratum. A dark brown clay-silt filled the spaces between the cobbles and there was some indication that they had also been covered in a layer of tarmac most of which was now missing. The cobble deposit (4) was slightly wider than the gap in the wall and extended eastwards beyond the limit of excavation. Wall (3) continued southwards to the limit of excavation. A small sample excavation

in the garden approximately 0.25m beyond the southern limit of the trench indicated that the wall turned westwards and may have joined the garden boundary wall where there was evidence of a scar and change in brickwork running up the full height of the wall. In the north-west corner, despite the wall (3) being heavily disturbed by tree roots, it was apparent that it used to join the end of the present boundary garden wall. The plinth type feature (5) used the same size red bricks as wall (3) and had an east to west wall attached to its north side with a 0.5m wide gap on the east side (Fig. 10).



Figure 7 Topsoil stripped from south-west corner  
Looking south-west. 1m scale

Only the natural clay substratum was observed within the area bound by the walls with no evidence of any floor or occupation levels surviving. This was the same both to the north and to the south of the plinth feature (5). Running down the east side of the wall was a clay land drain approximately 0.1m below the top of natural. This curved around the north-east corner of wall (3) corner to join another drain running along the north side of the wall before heading north-east down the slope of the paddock.





Figure 8 Building foundations exposed  
Looking south. 1m scale



Figure 9 Cobbled area (4)  
Looking east. 1m scale

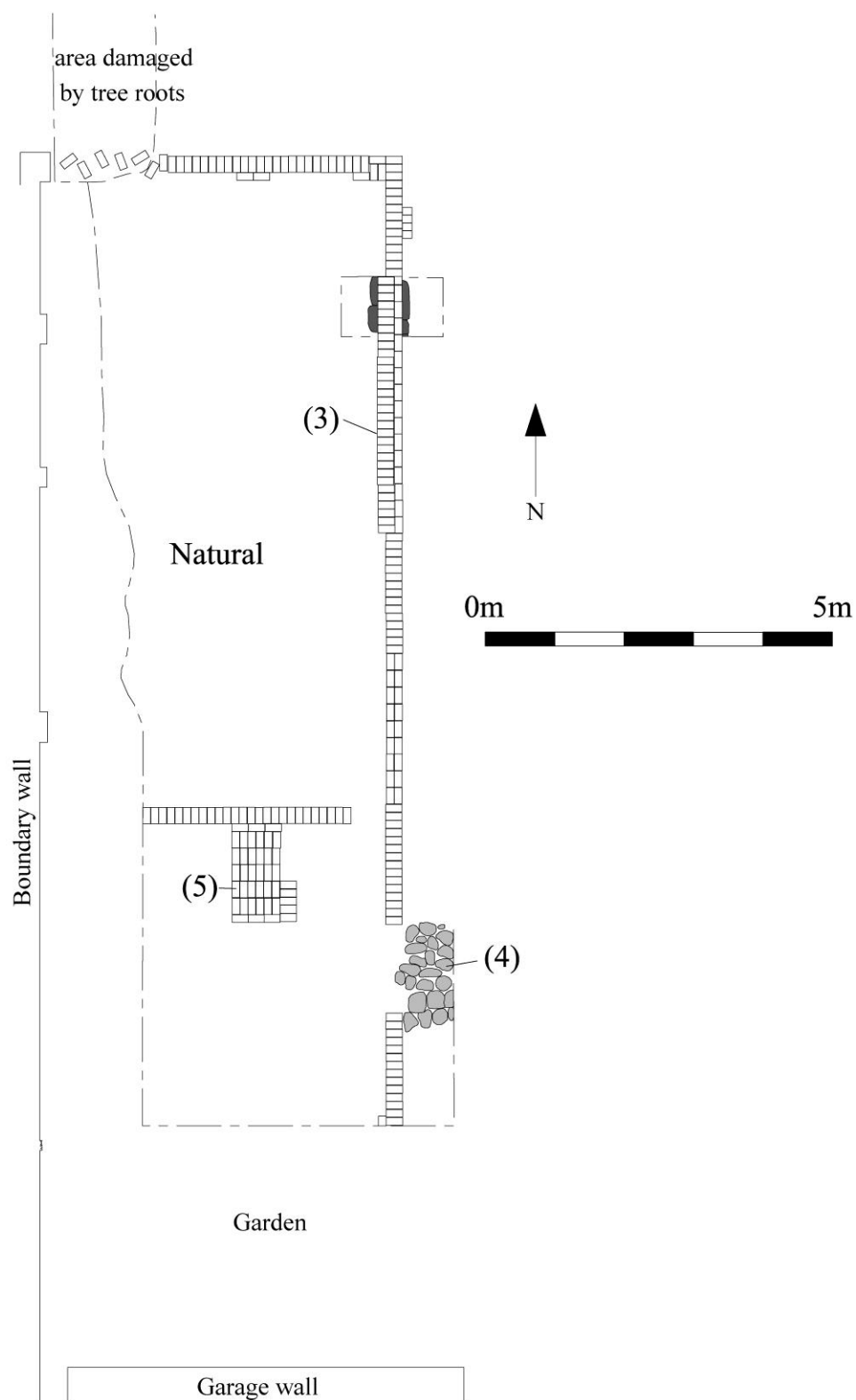


Figure 10 Excavated remains of building



A sample excavation across wall (3) near to the north-east corner showed that the bricks at this point only survived as a double course but had been laid on a wider foundation consisting of ironstone blocks dug into the natural clay. The blocks had been crudely shaped to an average size of 0.14m high to provide a level base for the brickwork (Figs. 11 and 12). Further to the south, as the ground level rose, the brickwork survived to a maximum of four courses on top of an ironstone foundation. The east to west wall at the plinth feature (5) was two brick courses high on ironstone footings but the plinth itself consisted of only one brick course laid directly into the clay.



Figure 11 Slot across wall (3)  
Looking east. 1m scale

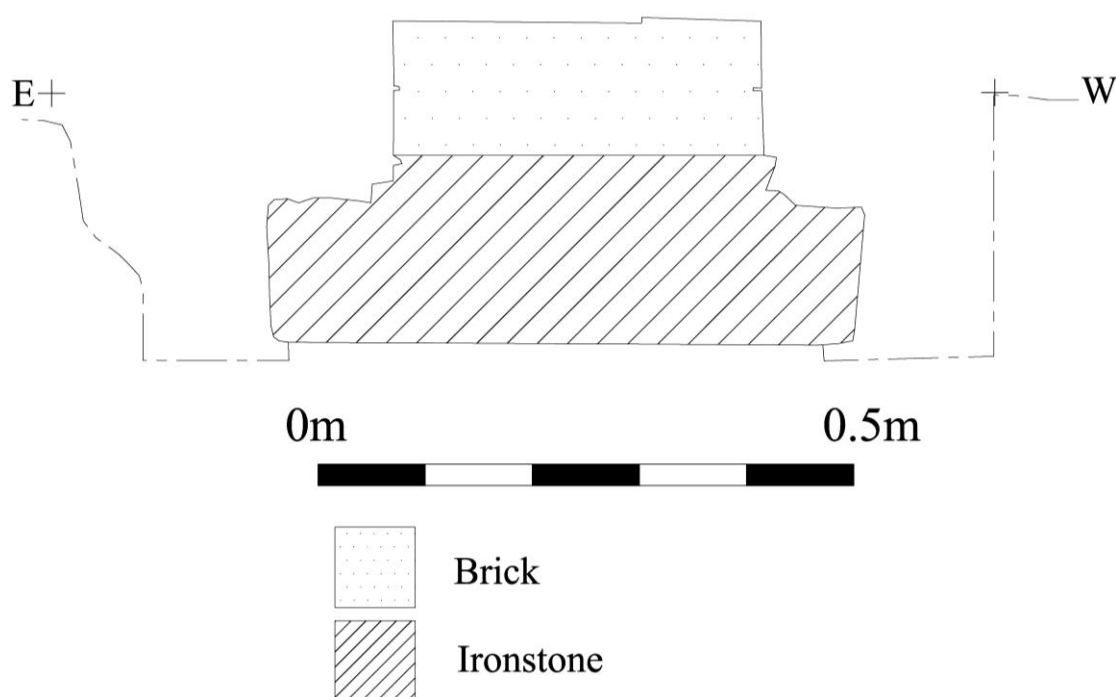


Figure 12 Profile across wall (3)

No other archaeological features or deposits were observed after stripping the topsoil and subsoil along the remaining raised areas around the paddock. A modern, gravel filled, land drain was noted running from south-west to north-east across the lower area but otherwise this area had been reduced at an earlier date to remove the uppermost 0.2m or more of subsoil and natural substratum.

### Discussion

Much of the development area had been landscaped to such an extent that most of the original subsoil and some of the natural had been removed at an earlier date. This has resulted in the possible loss of any archaeological deposits or remains which may have been present.

Fortunately however, one of the remaining areas which had not been landscaped was the south-west corner where the remains of the brick-built structure were observed. Superimposing the excavated remains onto the Ordnance Survey map indicates that this brickwork is the base of the rebuilt chapel which had what appears to be a porch facing towards the road to the south (Fig. 13). The single course of bricks forming the plinth (5) matches the location of the possible southern porch belonging to the chapel. The fact that these are not laid on ironstone footings, like the rest of the brickwork, suggests that either porch was a small and insubstantial structure which may even have been made of wood. The porch base is not keyed or tied into the wall brickwork and may also suggest that it was a later addition. To the south of the chapel the wall continued with the cobbled area (4) which seems likely to have formed a gateway leading into the adjacent field from a small yard or garden in front of the chapel. This yard or garden wall turned to the west just beyond the limit of excavation to join the

still surviving west boundary wall at the scar. It is probable that the landscaping of the garden has also affected the demolished remains of the chapel as none of the internal floor surfaces has survived and only the lower courses of brickwork remain. It is of note that the walls are so narrow and do not appear to be particularly strong which would suggest that the roof structure was relatively lightweight and insubstantial.

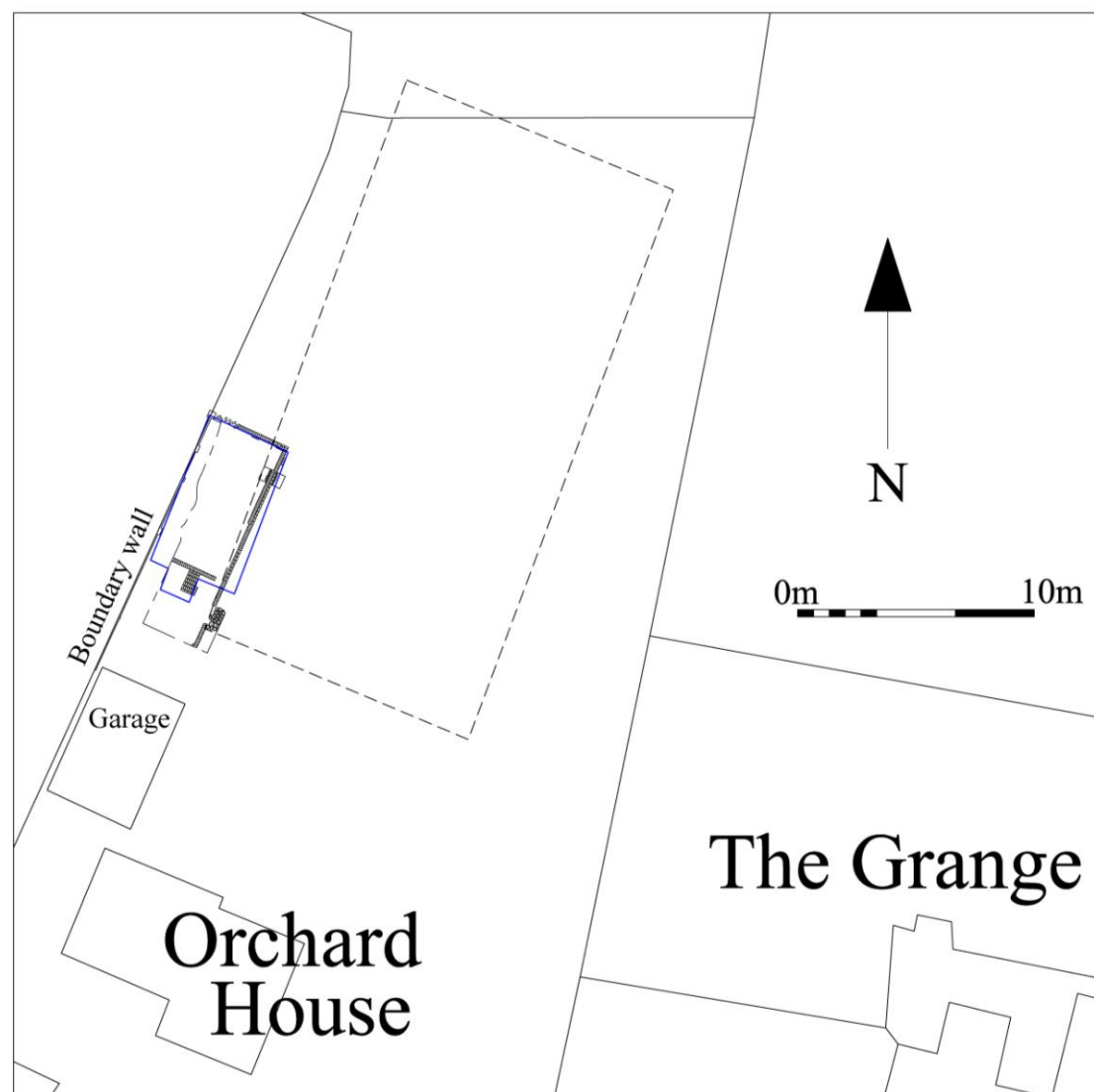


Figure 13 Superimposed chapel location (in blue) on top of excavation

### Archive

The archive consists of:

This report,

2 pro-forma watching brief forms,

1 pro-forma context index sheet,

5 context sheets – 3 single context record sheets and 2 brickwork sheets,

2 320mm x 290mm drawing sheets,

2 photo record sheets – 1 for digital and 1 for 35mm black and white,

1 contact sheet of nine 35mm black and white photographs,

Nine 35mm black and white negatives,

1 contact sheet of 28 digital photographs,

1 cd of this report and the digital photographs.

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under accession code X.A.41.2011.

### **Publication**

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

### **Bibliography**

Brief for Archaeological Investigation (Strip, Plan & Sample Excavation) at The Grange, Main Street, Slawston, Leicestershire. *Leicestershire County Council, March 2011.*

Brown, D. 2008 *Standard and Guidance for the Preparation of Archaeological Archives* (Institute for Archaeologists).

'Slawston', A History of the County of Leicestershire: Volume 5: Gartree Hundred (1964), pp. 297-303. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=22071> Date accessed: 04 April 2011.

Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Strip Plan and Sample Excavation at The Grange, Main Street, Slawston, Leicestershire. *University of Leicester Archaeological Services.*

### **Appendix I OASIS Information**

|                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                                  |                                   |
| Project Name                     | The Grange, Main Street, Slawston |
| Project Type                     | Strip, plan, sample               |
| Project Manager                  | P Clay                            |
| Project Supervisor               | A Hyam                            |
| Previous/Future work             | None                              |
| Current Land Use                 | Paddock                           |
| Development Type                 | Tennis court/leisure              |
| Reason for Investigation         | Change of use                     |
| Position in the Planning Process | As a condition                    |
| Site Co ordinates                | SP 7773 9452                      |
| Start/end dates of field work    | 16.03.2011 – 17.03.2011           |
| Archive Recipient                | LMS,                              |
| Study Area                       | 0.04ha                            |



## Appendix II Digital Photographs



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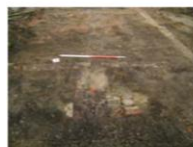
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