



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An Archaeological watching Brief at
31 Swan Street,
Seagrave,
Leicestershire.

NGR: SK 6185 1750

Andrew Hyam



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**An archaeological watching Brief at
31 Swan Street,
Seagrave,
Leicestershire.**

NGR: SK 6185 1750

A R Hyam

For: Mr and Mrs Banks

Approved by

Signed:  **Date:** 12/4/2012

Name: R.J. Buckley.

University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH

Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at 31 Swan Street, Seagrave, Leicestershire. The work took place on the 30th January and the 13th February 2012 in advance of the refurbishment of an existing kitchen extension and the construction of a new extension to the side of a Grade II listed 18th- (possibly 17th-) century house. The refurbishment had the potential to expose earlier fabric within the existing house which may have earlier 17th century origins. The development site also lies within the historic core of the medieval and post-medieval village.

The existing kitchen extension was stripped and the floor removed to reveal the stone foundations of the south wall of the Grade II listed house with a blocked doorway. The area of the proposed extension to the west of the house had been extensively landscaped prior to the development work which had removed any potential archaeological remains. No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the watching brief.

The fieldwork was carried out by A.R. Hyam. The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession Number X.A17.2012

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 watching brief at the Grade II listed 31 Swan Street, Seagrave, Leicestershire, NGR SK 6185 1750. Under planning application P/08/2821/2 it was proposed to demolish the existing kitchen area on the south end of the house and rebuild it to form a two-storey extension and to form a new porch extension to the side area. Subsequently it was decided to retain the kitchen and refurbish it rather than demolishing it. When considering the planning application the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to the planning authority, recommended the requirement for a programme of archaeological monitoring work during the building works and groundworks due to the listed status and the location of the site within an area of archaeological interest. The work has been commissioned by the owners Neil and Isabel Banks.

Background

The village of Seagrave lies approximately 14km to the north of Leicester and 14km west of Melton Mowbray (Fig. 1). The village lies at the base of a slope leading east towards the main A46 road which runs along a north-east to south-west ridge. The development is centred on SK 6185 1750 in Melton District. It consists of a long and

narrow plot facing onto Swan Street which forms a small hollow way at this point and extends southwards from a height of *c.* 70m OD at street level up to approximately 74m in the south-west corner of the site (Figs. 2 and 3). A strip along the western and southern sides of the house has been landscaped by cutting into the rising ground to create a level terrace. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Oadby Member Till and mudstone.

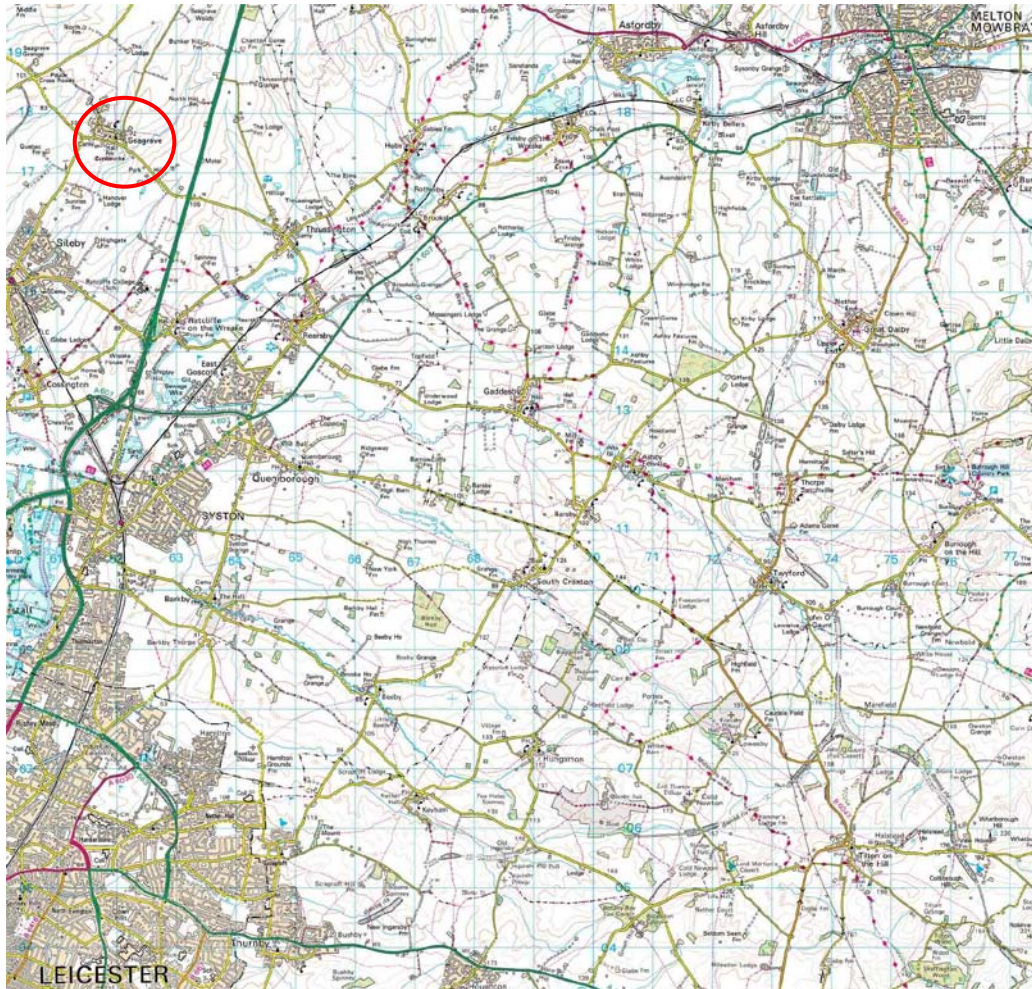


Figure 1. Seagrave location.

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright 1996. Licence Number AL 100029495



Figure 2. Site location highlighted

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright 1996. Licence Number AL 100029495



Figure 3. Development area and existing kitchen extension.
Retaining wall in foreground. Looking south-east

The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows the house as a long development with a number of smaller additions built onto its southern gable end. It is also shown as a public house up until the 1924 edition. Later OS editions show some of these additions disappearing and later reappearing as new buildings.

The house has the name Abbotsbury House attached to the gable end facing onto Swan Street (Fig. 4). It also has the date 1607 on this face although these numbers are also attached to the brickwork rather than built into the wall. The building has a number of clear phases and the ridgeline steps up as it follows the rise in ground level. It is Grade II listed (listing reference 405458) and is described as:

House. C18, possibly with early C17 origins. Whitewashed brick with high granite rubble stone plinth, band in part, brick nogged eaves in part, and Swithland and Welsh slate roof with brick ridge and left end projecting stacks. Gable to right. 2½ storeys of 2 3-light horizontal sliding sash windows with top lights. 2-light in gable attic. 2 3-light casements on ground floor. Entrance to rear in wing. Dated A.D. 1607 in later figures on band. Chamfered beams, inglenook and tie beam truss are visible inside. Formerly the White Swan Inn.



Figure 4. 31 Swan Street.
Looking south-east

As noted earlier it is intended to retain and refurbish the existing extension and to construct a small extension to the west of the building (Fig. 5). Part of the sloping garden will also be landscaped to create a wider terrace at this point.

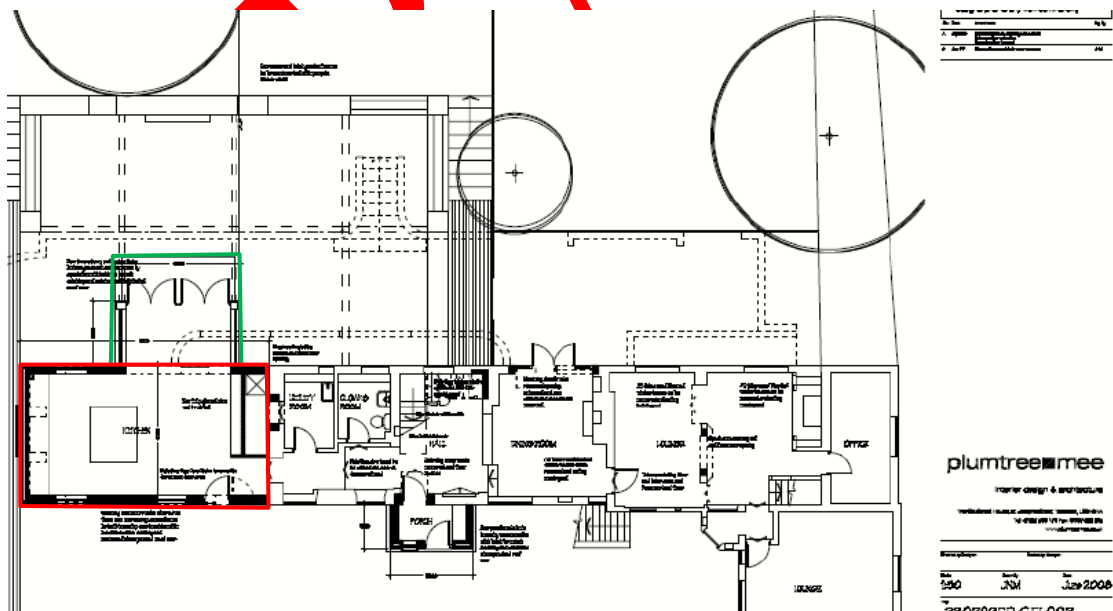


Figure 5. Developer plans
Existing kitchen footprint in red, porch extension in green. North to right of plan
Original plan supplied by developer

Objectives

Through archaeological attendance and, as appropriate, investigation, the objectives of the archaeological watching brief were:

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

Methodology

The project involved inspection of the kitchen extension following the soft strip and removal of the existing floor surface and make-up layer. The area around the proposed new extension was stripped of modern overburden by mechanical excavator and a retaining wall built around the terrace and into the slope of the ground was also removed.

All groundworks and deposits were recorded by notes, sketches and both digital colour and 35mm black and white photographs. The recording methodology followed that specified in the ULAS Design Specification for Archaeological Work for *31 Swan Street, Seagrave, Leicestershire*. All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2006) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008) and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS)*.

Results

The site was first visited on the 30th of January 2012 to inspect the results of the soft strip of the existing kitchen extension. On arrival all of the internal fittings had been removed along with doors, windows, roof linings and part of the floor. The remaining concrete floor was in the process of being removed using a pneumatic drill attached to the front actor of a mechanical excavator (Fig. 6).

The existing concrete floor measured approximately 0.15m in depth and was laid on a layer of polystyrene foam. This in turn was laid on a 0.1m thick layer of dry mix type cement. A further 0.3m to 0.4m of compacted mill waste was laid beneath this onto the natural clay substratum (Fig. 7). Sample excavations were made in a small area of the floor before complete removal. The use of relatively modern building materials suggests a date for this part of the building was not much more than 30 years. No archaeological features were observed cutting into the natural substratum beneath the removed modern floor.



Figure 6. Modern floor being removed after soft strip.
Looking south-east



Figure 7. Sample excavation to assess depth of floor.

After the floor had been removed it was possible to inspect the foundation of the south gable wall of the main house. Below the plaster line, at skirting height, was a course of unworked limestone blocks and large smooth boulders similar to those already visible in places along the western wall of the house. In the centre of the wall was a 0.95m wide gap indicating a blocked, with breeze blocks, doorway leading from the house into an earlier outbuilding (Fig. 8). A modern doorway pierces the gable on the eastern side. Approximately 3m above ground level in the centre of the gable was a rectangular wooden beam projecting approximately 0.1m out from the wall. This may be the stub of a ridge belonging to an earlier building predating the modern kitchen. If this is so the height is such to suggest that the earlier walls were significantly lower than the present building.



Figure 8. Blocked doorway
Note projecting beam in gable. Looking north. 1m scale

The second site visit, on the 13th of February, was to observe the groundwork preparations for the proposed extension. Before the start of the extension work the garden, to the west of the house, consisted of a narrow terrace at house level which had been cut into the natural ground slope rising to the west and south-west (see Fig. 4). Removal of the brick retaining wall at the southern end and a timber wall to the north revealed that the original natural substratum layer was considerably higher than at present (Fig. 9). A thick layer of topsoil and disturbed subsoil up to 0.6m in depth had been deposited to create the sloping banked garden. The original terracing had cut into the natural greyish yellow silty clay with patches of orange yellow clayish sand by between 0.4m and 0.6m. The undisturbed, truncated, natural clay extended across the terrace towards the house. At the junction where the proposed extension met the existing buildings no evidence of earlier structures could be seen. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the development area.



Figure 9. Terrace after removal of retaining wall.
Looking south-west. 1m scale

Discussion

Within the existing kitchen area there is clear evidence that there was a doorway in the centre of the gable end which led into an earlier building. The use of breeze blocks to block this doorway suggests that this blocking happened relatively recently and may have been at the same time as the new kitchen. There is also the indication from the projecting stub of timber that the roof height and walls of the older building were much lower than the present one. No evidence was seen during the site strip outside the building for any earlier buildings which might suggest that the kitchen was built over the earlier footprint. Map evidence also supports this idea.

Despite the potential for archaeological features or deposits none were observed during the course of this watching brief. The key reason for this was the earlier truncation of the ground to create a terrace around the house.

Archive

The archive consists of:

- 2 pro-forma watching brief forms,
- 1 photo record sheet, combined for colour digital and for 35mm black and white,
- 1 contact sheet of 8 35mm black and white photographs,
- 35mm black and white negatives,
- 1 contact sheet of 20 digital photographs,
- 1 cd of this report and the digital photographs.

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

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

Design Specification for Archaeological Work. *31 Swan Street, Seagrave Leicestershire*. ULAS

IfA, 2006, *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Appendix 1. Digital photographs



Seagrave13.2.12 (1).JPG



Seagrave13.2.12 (2).JPG



Seagrave13.2.12 (3).JPG



Seagrave13.2.12 (4).JPG



Seagrave13.2.12 (5).JPG



Seagrave13.2.12 (6).JPG



Seagrave13.2.12 (7).JPG



Seagrave13.2.12 (8).JPG



Seagrave13.2.12 (9).JPG



Seagrave 30Jan 001.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 002.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 003.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 004.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 005.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 006.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 007.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 008.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 009.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 010.jpg



Seagrave 30Jan 011.jpg

Appendix 2. OASIS information

Project Name	31 Swan Street, Seagrave, Leicestershire
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	R Buckley
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	None
Current Land Use	Domestic house
Development Type	Extension, refurbishment
Reason for Investigation	As condition
Position in the Planning Process	
Site Co ordinates	SK 6185 1750
Start/end dates of field work	30.1.2012 – 13.2.2012
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Study Area	300m ²

DRAFT

ULAS Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay
University of Leicester Archaeological
Services (ULAS)
University of Leicester,
University Road,
Leicester LE1 7RH

T: +44 (0)116 252 2848

F: +44 (0)116 252 2614

E: ulas@le.ac.uk

W: www.le.ac.uk/ulas



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