

# **Archaeological Services**



An Archaeological Watching Brief During The Installation Of The Leicester City Centre District Heating System, Leicester (NGR SK 58 05 Area)

Jennifer Browning and Mathew Morris

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# An Archaeological Watching Brief During The Installation Of The Leicester City Centre District Heating System, Leicester (SK58 05 Area)

#### Jennifer Browning and Mathew Morris

For: Cofely District Energy

Checked by Project Manager		
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#### An Archaeological Watching Brief during the Installation of the Leicester City Centre District Heating System, Leicester (SK 58 05 Area)

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# Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out in Leicester City Centre by University of Leicester Archaeological Services between September 2011 and August 2012 during the installation of pipework for the new district heating system by Cofely District Energy. The work produced evidence relevant to the Roman town and medieval town, including a Roman burial outside the walls, a Roman road inside the town precinct, adjacent to the defences and tentative evidence for the defences themselves. The archive will be held by Leicester City Council under the Accession Number A12 2011.

# Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Cofely District Energy to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of trenches for the Leicester City Centre District Heating System. The watching brief is required to cover the excavation of service trenches in Berridge Street, Bowling Green Street, Granby Street, Granby Place, Welford Place, Greyfriars, Horsefair Street, Bishop Street, Belvoir Street, Wellington Street and New Walk. Occasional visits to Princess Road, King Street and Regent Road, where the archaeological potential is considered lower, were also undertaken (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

This archaeological work is in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, Policy HE12.3 (DCLG 2010). The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the City Archaeologist, Leicester City Council. In all, 22 visits were made between September 2011 and August 2012.

# Geology

The British Geological Survey records that that in the centre of Leicester the bedrock geology consists of mudstone of the Branscombe Mudstone Formation. Superficial geology recorded in the area of Friar Lane and Market Street is Birstall Member- sand and gravel (Geology of Britain viewer <u>http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/</u> - accessed 4th January 2012).

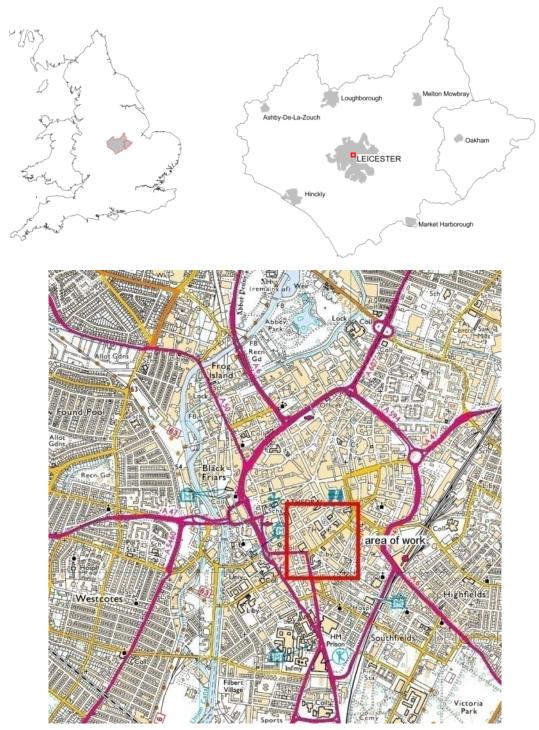


Figure 1: Site Location

Reproduced from *Explorer*<sup>®</sup> 1:25 000 scale, Sheet 233 (Leicester and Hinckley) by permission of Ordnance Survey<sup>®</sup> on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright 2005

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#### Historical and Archaeological Background

The following overview and street by street examination of potential is taken from the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Buckley 2011).

The affected streets lie in the southern part of the historic core of Roman and medieval Leicester. The earliest settlement in Leicester dates from the 1st century BC and was

located on the east bank of the river Soar. A Roman fort may have been constructed near West Bridge in the 1st century AD, and Roman settlement developed in the area of the pre-existing Iron Age settlement from the mid 1st century AD and gradually spread eastwards. Leicester became a Civitas capital in around 100AD and a regular grid pattern of streets was established. The forum and baths were constructed in the mid 2nd century and many masonry town houses, some with lavish mosaic floors and plastered and painted walls also date from this period. By the late 2nd century, the town was enclosed with earthen defences, to which a stone wall was added probably in the last quarter of the 3rd century. The streets affected by the proposed groundwork lie partly within the southern part of the walled town and partly outside it, in an area with some potential for burials. Unconfirmed reports of a mosaic pavement beneath the present Town Hall also suggests some potential for extramural settlement. The possibility of tile and pottery kilns south of the walled town may also be suggested by antiquarian discoveries.

Anglo-Saxon settlement seems to have been established within the walls of the Roman Town in the 5th century AD. To the south, along Oxford Street, further evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement has also emerged, some of which may date to the 7th century AD. A chance find of an Anglo-Saxon loom weight on Pocklington's Walk may suggest settlement was also present in this area.

The medieval town more or less occupies the same area as its Roman predecessor, the Roman town walls continuing to exert an influence on development until they were demolished in the 16th-17th centuries. Some of the trenches will be located within the walls and run along streets which did not exist in the medieval period (e.g. Berridge Street and Greyfriars) and therefore have the potential for evidence of medieval plots. The trench in Greyfriars lies partly within the precinct of a Franciscan friary, which has been the subject of recent archaeological work and in which Richard III was reputedly buried following the Battle of Bosworth in 1489. The trench on Berridge Street crosses the line of the Roman and medieval town defences and has potential for furnishing information on their construction, modification and final demolition. Streets outside the town walls lie in an area with more limited potential for medieval activity.

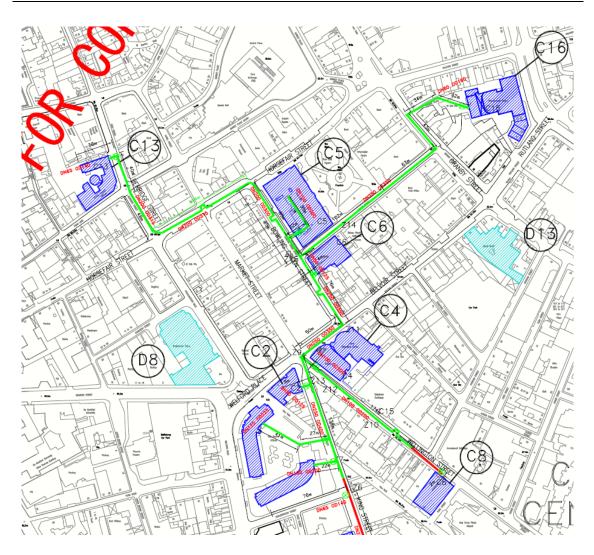


Figure 2: Site Location and watching brief areas (green).

Not to Scale (plan supplied by client).

# Archaeological Potential by Street

# Greyfriars

- Roman there is general potential for intra-mural activity
- Medieval and post-medieval Greyfriars was not established as a street until after 1828 (based on cartographic evidence), so the line of the proposed service trench may cross the precinct of the Franciscan friary which occupied this area between the 13th and 16th centuries. Nothing is known at present of the layout of the Greyfriars buildings. Intriguingly, the 1741 map of Leicester (Figure 3) appears to show some structures in the southern part of the Greyfriars precinct which could either be remnant medieval buildings or perhaps the remains of the mansion constructed here after the Reformation.

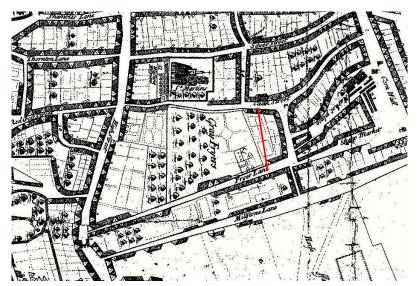


Figure 3: Inset of 1741 Robert's map showing approximate line of Greyfriars.

# Berridge Street

- Roman this trench crosses the line of the Roman town defences and therefore has the potential to reveal parts of the rampart, wall and ditches.
- Medieval as above, together with evidence for the robbing of the town wall.

# Horsefair Street, Bowling Green Street, Bishop Street, Granby Street, Granby Place

- Roman there is potential that these trenches may uncover cremation and inhumation cemeteries and other extra-mural occupation such as pottery kilns.
- Medieval/post-medieval uncertain, possibly cultivation, extra-mural occupation, brick kilns?

#### King Street, Wellington Street, New Walk

- Roman there is potential that these trenches may uncover cremation and inhumation cemeteries and other extra-mural occupation such as pottery kilns; along with the projected line of the *Via Devana*, the Roman road from Leicester to Godmanchester.
- Medieval/post-medieval uncertain, possibly cultivation, extra-mural occupation, brick kilns?

# Archaeological Objectives

The main objective of the archaeological work was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any significant archaeology on the site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The aims of the watching brief were to:

- To identify the presence/absence of any 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 required a professional archaeologist to supervise all groundwork likely to impact upon any archaeological remains. The work involved the supervision and inspection of machine dug service trenches in order to identify any archaeological deposits or the natural substratum. This was carried out using a mini 360° mechanical excavator with a 0.6m toothed bucket or ditching bucket. All exposed areas, sections and accessible 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 archaeological deposits or features were given unique context numbers and recorded on pro-forma ULAS context recording forms if deemed appropriate. If inhumations were encountered, a licence for the removal of human remains was obtained from the Ministry of Justice. Each inhumation was assigned a unique skeleton number (SK) and recorded on pro-forma ULAS skeleton recording forms.

All work followed the *Institute for Archaeologists' (IFA) Code of Conduct* (2010) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching-briefs* (2008) and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS)*. A *Design Specification for Archaeological Work* was produced by ULAS prior to the archaeological work being undertaken.

#### Results

The service trenches were typically 1m wide and excavated to a minimum 1m depth. The following observations were made during the work:

#### Corner of University Road and Mayor's Walk (SK 5931 0309)

The recovery of human bone by the contractors prompted a visit in September 2011. The disarticulated bones were found at the base of the trench, approximately 1.2m below ground level, in a thick deposit of greenish brown soil mixed with redeposited red clay and modern building material. The evidence therefore suggests that the bones were residual and were redeposited from elsewhere.

#### Granby Place and Granby Street

Visits made in October 2011 did not reveal any archaeological deposits. The trenches were excavated through c.1m to c.1.3m of made-up ground, with a high level of disturbance from previous cables and footings. Natural substratum was not seen.

#### Bishop Street

Visits made in February and March 2012 did not reveal any archaeological deposits. The trench was excavated through c.0.3m of modern street surface, c.0.2m to c.1m of dark greyish-brown sandy-silt (topsoil) and c.0.3m of mottled greyish-orange silty-sandy (subsoil). Both appeared relatively clean in section with no obvious human disturbance apart from recent cables and pipes. Natural substratum, where seen, was orangey-red sandy-clay.

## Bowling Green Street

The ground was relatively undisturbed in this area, perhaps reflecting the fact that it did not become built up until the 18th century. The excavation of the trench cut through a northeast-southwest aligned skeleton. The grave cut was visible in both sides of the trench and was clearly sealed beneath overburden below the modern street surface. The position of the recovered bones suggests that the head of the skeleton lay towards the southwest end of the grave (although as this was not exposed, it is impossible to be certain). The upper part of the body, including the skull, cervical and thoracic vertebrae, ribs and scapulae were not disturbed and therefore presumably remain in situ, however the lower half comprising parts of the pelves, femora and a fibula were recovered. The grave fill consisted of mid-grey brown silty sand with moderate small pebbles and sandy patches. Three nails were recovered, including one from the section, indicating that the body was buried in a coffin.

Within the rest of the trench the strata consisted of hot-rolled asphalt 0.09m thick, over a previous similar surface (0.10m thick). Below this was a layer of concrete c.0.2m thick with a hardcore base, overlying dark brown silty clay with frequent stones, pebbles and occasional brick fragments, c. 0.25-0.30m thick. Natural subsoil consisted of yellow brown clayey sand with frequent mottles and silty streaks and was revealed at the comparatively shallow depth of c.0.6m below street level.

The remains of a tram track were observed close to the junction with Belvoir Street.

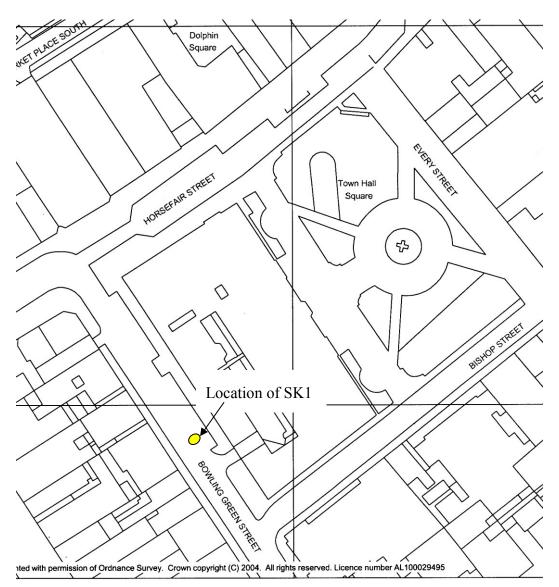


Figure 4: Location of skeleton in Bowling Green Street

# Horsefair Street and Millstone Lane

No archaeological deposits were observed and the majority of the trench was heavily disturbed by modern services. There were isolated pockets where undisturbed natural subsoil was visible.

# King Street and New Walk

The trenches in the New Walk area followed a similar pattern, with modern road surface (0.3m thick) overlying made ground, generally consisting of dark, brownish grey, clayey silt, mixed with re-deposited brownish orange sandy clay and gravel and fragments of brick and charcoal. The natural subsoil, red sandy clay, was encountered generally at between 1.3 and 1.6m below street level, however as the trench progressed towards Belvoir Street the made ground was deeper than the base of the trench. No archaeological deposits were encountered in these trenches and there was no trace of the Roman road that had been suspected.

#### Berridge Street

Visits made in June and July 2012 revealed tentative evidence for the town defences. Although the town wall was not seen, a possible robber trench was identified, aligned approximately east-west. This manifested as a shallow cut filled with mid-greyish brown clayey-sand with occasional bone, charcoal flecks, with mortar and sandy patches. In the base of the north-west facing section there was a squared block of sandstone and a fragment of granite. In the opposite section was a larger block of granite measuring approximately 0.3m in length. The subsoil at the very base of the trench consisted of mid-yellow brown clayey sand with small cobbles.

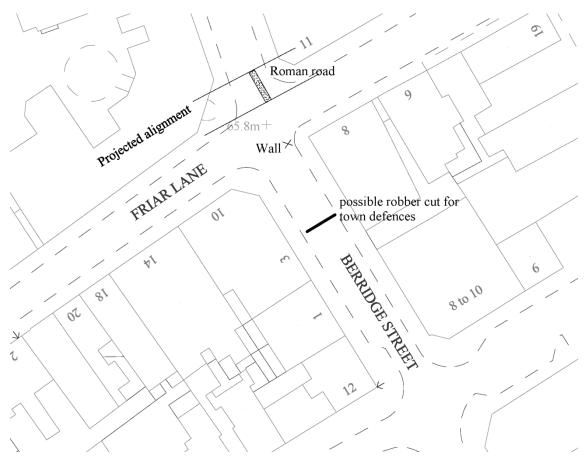


Figure 5: Location of archaeological features (Basemap: Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey<sup>®</sup> on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495)

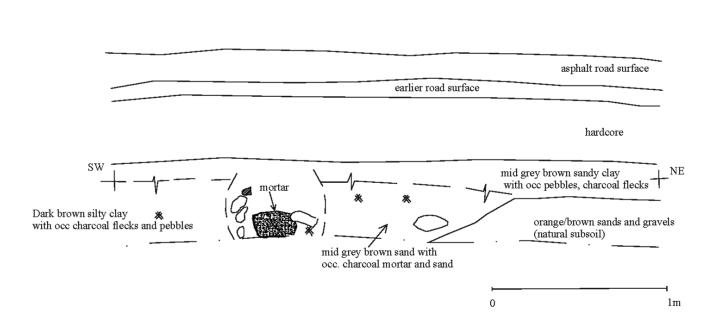


Figure 6: Section showing tentative evidence for the town defences

At the north end of the trench, practically on the junction with Friar Lane there was a stone-built wall or foundation, aligned east west (Figure 5). This was constructed from blocks of Daneshill sandstone, bonded with a yellow sandy mortar. The wall was 0.4m wide and extended from 1.3m to 0.3m below the ground surface. At the base of the wall several bricks were noted, including a brick footing which crossed the base of the trench, which indicated that its origins were 19th century or later. However, the type, size and shape of the stone used and proximity to the projected town wall suggest the possibility that the stone was reused from an earlier structure.

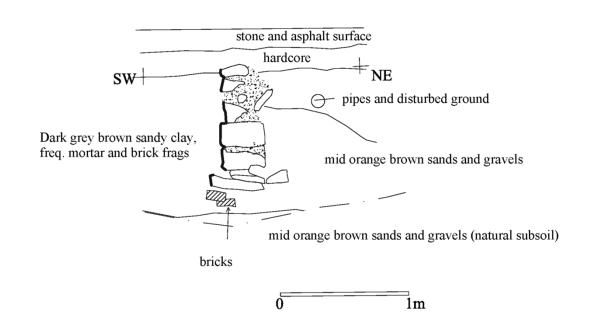


Figure 7: Elevation of wall observed at the north end of the trench

## Greyfriars

Deposits representing a Roman road were revealed at the Friar Lane end of the trench. These were visible in the sides of the trench for approximately 7m from the northern side of the Friar Lane junction and indicated a road orientated northeast-southwest. It was not possible to establish the full width of the feature since it was cut by a brick manhole on the southern side and on the northern side by a brick footing. The road consisted of a series of compacted gravel layers, varying in consistency, overlain by modern make-up for the current road surface. The top two surviving layers consisted of light yellow brown compacted gravel and sand (0.20m and 0.13m thick), below which there was a reddish brown deposit, consisting of compacted sand with less gravel (0.15m thick). Directly below this was a layer of larger pebbles (approximate dimensions 90mm x 50mm), overlying reddish brown sand with some gravel (0.22m thick). The base layer of the road consisted of gravel within a clay silty clay matrix. This overlay light grey silty sand with an orange mottle, which is interpreted as an early ground surface. The presence of the deposits in both sides of the trench suggests that it was aligned northeast-southwest, which would place it parallel and partly beneath the present line of Friar Lane. The concreted nature of the gravel layers and the difficulty in digging through them is emphasised by the fact that many of the modern pipes and cables were found at a comparatively shallow depth in this area.

The deposits in the rest of the trench consisted of modern road make up to a depth of 1.5m, overlying thick dark brown sandy silt, to the base of the trench, containing brick, slate and stone debris.



Figure 8: Section through the Roman road, showing a sequence of deposits

# Conclusion

The watching brief maintained during the excavation of the district heating system trenches has revealed further evidence of both intra and extra-mural activity. These included a human skeleton, uncovered on Bowling Green Street, which is associated with the Roman cemetery outside the town walls. On Berridge Street there were hints of the remains of the town wall and on Greyfriars, a road of probable Roman date had survived, which would have been within the town precinct. As well as identifying areas of archaeological potential, the watching brief has also indicated where the ground is particularly disturbed, for example Horsefair Street was badly affected by modern services. However, it is clear that small pockets of undisturbed ground exist even among areas with large numbers of services and other modern intrusions.

It was customary in Roman times to bury the dead outside the town walls. In Leicester Roman cemeteries dating from the 2nd to the 4th centuries have been excavated to the south of the town at Newarke Street (Cooper 1996 and Derrick 2009), to the north at Vine Street (Jacklin 2009), and Clarence Street on the north-eastern side (Gardner 2005), while to the west further burials have been recovered from Western Road (Jacklin 2009). While many more burials have been recovered in the Newarke Street

cemetery to the west of Bowling Green Street, there is increasing evidence for the survival of burials in this part of town. In the late 1990s, a skeleton was revealed during archaeological monitoring of water mains renewal (Warren 2001). The grave was aligned north-south, indicating that it was pre-Christian and was located approximately 30m south of the current burial, at the junction with Bishop Street. Analysis concluded that this was a male over the age of forty (Chapman 2001). The grave identified during the current work was aligned south-west to north-east and contained the bones of a single individual with evidence for a pathological disorder. Iron nails observed within the grave fill suggest the presence of a coffin, which is in keeping with other observations elsewhere in the town: coffined inhumations have been found at Western Road, Clarence Street and Newarke Street.

Stretches of Roman Road have been encountered at a number of other locations within the town, most recently during excavations at Vine Street (Morris et al 2009). The section of road seen at Greyfriars is very similar in construction to these others, which was 0.8m thick and consisted of a series of six gravel layers, representing the construction and re-surfacing of the road. Characteristic features of a Roman road, such as an agger and lateral ditches, were not encountered, due to modern truncation. However, this is the first time a road has been encountered in this location, apparently running along the inside perimeter of the town wall on the southern boundary of the town bordering *Insulas XXXV* and *XXXVI*.

The town defences would have crossed the area now occupied by Berridge Street. These would have consisted of a wall, a rampart and a series of ditches, up to 7m wide and 3m deep. The town defences were built in the late 2nd century and initially were constructed of earth and timber. The town wall was probably added to the front of the rampart in the 3rd century. (Buckley 1987). It is thought that the defences remained in place into the medieval period with the ditches being maintained and the town wall largely standing. Documentary sources supported by excavated evidence from sites in Leicester, suggests that widespread robbing of the fabric of the wall took place during the 12th and 13th centuries. In 1591 an order was made forbidding the removal of stone from the wall without permission of the Common Hall, and upon payment of 20 shillings, suggesting that the town, by now, allowed the dismantling of its walls provided the stone was paid for (Buckley and Lucas 1987, 63). The wall has therefore mostly survived in Leicester as a robber trench. On the south side of the town, previous work has revealed glimpses of the defences. In the early 20th century a section of walling was observed on Wycliffe Street (the street west of Berridge Street), which was originally thought to be the town wall, however, this was later thought to be unlikely due to it's narrow width (0.74m) and position (Buckley and Lucas 1987, 48). A possible town ditch was seen on Horsefair Street in 1950, while masonry thought to represent the town wall was seen at Southgates and while footings and a fragment of rampart were seen at Friar Lane in 1939 (Buckley and Lucas 1987, 45-48). In 1997, archaeological work undertaken at the corner of Friar Lane and Berridge Street, adjacent to the current trench revealed a large east-west aligned feature of post-medieval date that was tentatively suggested as the robber trench for the wall (Gnanaratnam 1997). The work also revealed an early Roman ditch and gully on the same alignment (*ibid*). Observations of a putative cut for the robber trench during the current work on Berridge Street are therefore in accordance with these earlier findings, although unfortunately do confirm that the defences are poorly preserved in this area.

#### References

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#### Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicester Museums Services with the accession number.A12 2011 and consists of the following:

Digital photographs;

Black and white contact prints and negatives;

Photo Index;

Site notes;

Permatrace sections;

Finds as listed in the Appendix;

# Publication

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

OASIS no.	universi1-138689
Project Name	Leicester City Centre District Heating System
Project Type	Watching-brief
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Jennifer Browning and Mathew Morris
Previous/Future work	-
Current Land Use	Industry and commerce- retail
Development Type	Laying of new heating system
Reason for Investigation	PPS 5
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co-ordinates	SK 58 05 (area)
Start/end dates of field work	27.09.11 to 13.08.12
Archive Recipient	Leicester Museum Services
Study Area	N/A

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

ULAS would like to thank the client, Cofely District Energy, and their contractors on site for their help and co-operation during the work. The watching brief visits were carried out by Mathew Morris and Jennifer Browning, the report was written by Jennifer Browning with contributions from Mathew Morris. Nicholas Cooper identified the pottery and Jennifer Browning identified the bones. Richard Buckley managed the project for ULAS.

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# Appendix 1: List of Finds

# Corner of University Road and Mayors Walk (U/S)

- 1 x clay pipe stem and bowl with grape design;
- 1 x medium mammal rib fragment;
- 1 x large mammal shaft fragment;
- 1 x sheep/goat radius shaft fragment;
- 1 x human femur shaft;
- 1 x human ?fibula;

# **Bowling Green Street**

# Human Bones (Grave cut [1]; (2); bones (3) SK1)

Elements as listed below were recovered and represent a single individual: SK1. Measurements of the proximal femur suggest that the individual was likely to be male; vertical diameter = 52.2mm (after Pearson 1917, table 27)). The bones show signs of pathological changes, manifesting as periostitis around the femora and pelves, which could indicate infectious disease.

- 1 x right radius (proximal shaft);
- 1 x right ulna (proximal shaft and olecranon);
- 1 x left pelvis (acetabulum fused);
- 1 x right pelvis (fragments)
- 1 x right proximal femur and half of shaft (fused);
- 1 x left proximal femur and part of shaft (fused);
- 1 x left distal femur (fused);
- 2 x fibula shaft;
- 1 x tibia shaft;

# Other finds

3 x nails (Fe);

u/s 2 x oyster shell fragments;

u/s 1 x cattle mandible (fragmented) with second and third molar;

#### References

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Pearson, K.1917-1919 *A study of the long bones of the English skeleton I: The femur*. University of London, University College, Department of Applied Statistics, Company Research, Memoirs, Biometric Series X, chapters 1-4.

## Berridge Street (u/s)

## Medieval and post-Medieval Pottery

#### Nicholas J. Cooper

A total of five unstratified sherds of pottery were recovered and were identified by form and fabric according to the Leicestershire post-Roman pottery fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999, 166).

The assemblage comprises a single sherd (10g) of green glazed pottery from a medieval jug from Chilvers Coton (Fabric CC1) dating between 1200-1400, three joining sherds (30g) from a post- medieval or modern earthenware bowl with a mottled brown glaze (Fabric EA3) from Staffordshire, dated 1650-1770, and an unglazed post-medieval or modern earthenware dish (140g) with straight sides and a flat rim (Fabric EA). The last is an unusual form and may represent a misfired 'second' which remained unglazed.

#### Reference

Davies, S. and Sawday, D., 1999 'The post-Roman pottery' in A. Connor and R.J. Buckley and *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*. Leicester Archaeology Monograph 5, 165-213.

# Other finds (U/S)

3 x glass fragments, including 2 bottle bases (modern);

1 x clay pipe bowl (plain);

1 x horse metacarpal (proximal and shaft);

1 x large mammal pelvis (ilium);

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2008/9**