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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
at the Ridgeway Primary School,
Market Harborough,
Leicestershire**

NGR SP 7373 8825

Jennifer Browning




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**An Archaeological Watching Brief at the
Ridgeway Primary School, Market Harborough,
Leicestershire
(NGR SP 7373 8825)**

Jennifer Browning

For: Leicestershire County Council

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An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Ridgeway Primary School, Market Harborough, Leicestershire (NGR SP 7373 8825)

Jennifer Browning

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for a new classroom at Ridgeway Primary School, Market Harborough, Leicestershire (NGR 7373 8825). The work took place during the removal of a tarmac sports court within the footprint of the building. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered during the course of the watching brief. The northern part of the area appeared to have been built up, during levelling for the sports court surface and natural substrata was only encountered in a small trench dug at the northern end of the site at approximately 0.5m below ground level.

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the Accession Number X.A62.2012.

1. Introduction

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), (DCLG 2012) at Ridgeway Primary School, Market Harborough (SP 7373 8825; Fig. 1). The work took place in January 2013 and was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Leicestershire County Council. The watching brief was concerned with groundworks for a new classroom block north-east of the existing school buildings.

As the application site lies within an area of archaeological potential, as indicated by its close proximity to a probable Roman small town (HER ref: **MLE1948**), the Senior Planning Archaeologist recommended that archaeological work should be undertaken to determine if any heritage assets were likely to be affected by the proposed development. The watching brief follows trial trenching on an adjacent part of the site in June 2012 (Kipling 2012a), which produced evidence for medieval agriculture. However, the development site was subsequently relocated to the west of this trench. Therefore the Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council has recommended a programme of archaeological attendance, inspection and recording during groundworks, as archaeological conditions may be different to those observed within the evaluation trench. A strategy for the work was set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (Kipling 2012b).

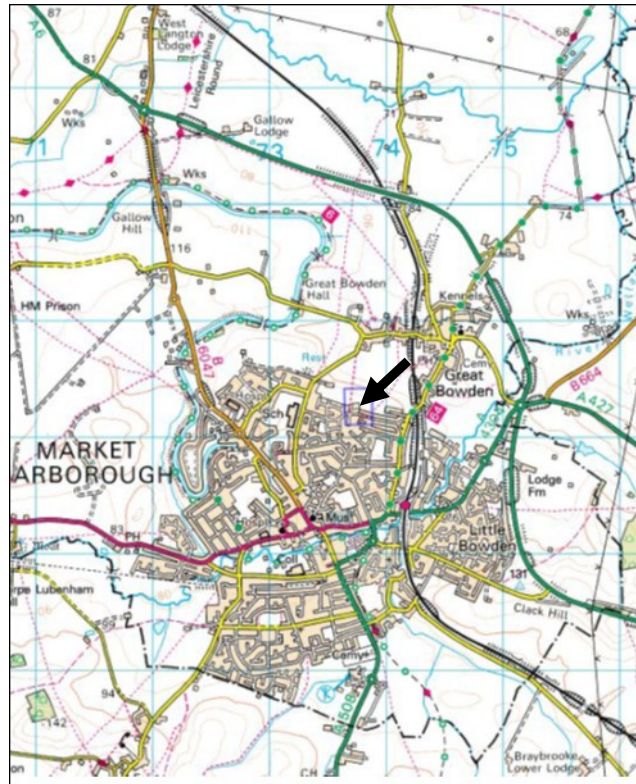


Figure 1: Location plan Scale 1:50000

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2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

The proposed development (SP 7373 8825; centre) is located on the northern edge of Market Harborough, north of The Ridgeway on a flat area of high ground (Fig. 1). A new classroom block has been proposed to replace the existing mobile classrooms on a site currently occupied by a tarmac netball court.

The underlying geology of the area is shown by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain to likely consist of Dyrham Formation siltstone and mudstone overlain with mid Pleistocene Diamicton till. The site is flanked to the west by a grassed playing field and to the north by school buildings.

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The proposed works are located immediately to the west of a probable Roman small town (HER ref: **MLE1948**). A large quantity of Roman artefacts including pottery, coins, tesserae and building material, have been recovered from the properties along The Ridgeway to the east of the School, indicating extensive settlement activity, likely to represent a small town. The boundaries of this activity are unclear and it is possible that it extends into the area of the proposed works. In addition, Iron Age pottery has also been found in the area and geophysical survey and excavations immediately to the west of the School found an Iron Age

settlement consisting of a number of Iron Age enclosures and possible roundhouse structures (MLE19107; Harvey 2011).

An archaeological evaluation undertaken on the adjacent playing field to the west in June 2012 revealed evidence for medieval agricultural activity, in the form of a furrow (Kipling 2012). A previous watching brief was carried out for an access road in 1999, to the south of the current development area, adjacent to The Ridgeway. No archaeological deposits were revealed during the work (Browning 1999).

As it was deemed likely that the proposed development would have a damaging effect on any archaeological deposits, should they exist, an archaeological watching brief was required by the planning authority following the approved written scheme of investigation (Kipling 2012b).

4. Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the current archaeological work was:

- 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 advance understanding of the heritage assets
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

5. Methodology

The work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (Score 2012) and adhered to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev. 2010) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (rev. 2008).

The programme of work consisted of the removal of the existing tarmac sports court and overburden, within the footprint of the new classroom, using a JCB 3CX with a ditching bucket.

6. Results

The site was visited on the 24th January 2013. Approximately 0.3-0.4m of tarmac and hardcore was removed in the footprint of the new building (Fig. 2). The strip began at the northern end of the development area and exposed mid grey/brown silty clay with occasional fragments of brick and ceramic, which was suspected of being re-deposited. A short trench was therefore excavated at the northern end of the strip to examine the strata (Fig. 3). This revealed buried topsoil, suggesting that the ground was built up at the northern end, presumably during levelling prior to the installation of the netball court. A thin subsoil interface of reddish brown silty clay subsoil overlay the natural subsoil, which was

encountered at 0.5m below ground level and consisted of light yellow brown silty clay with frequent chalky stones.

Towards the southern end of the strip the re-deposited subsoil was replaced by mid-brown silty clay loam. Investigation suggested that this was buried topsoil. This suggests that only the very surface of this area was removed before stoning up for the netball court. On the western side of the footprint a thin layer of blue/grey clay was exposed beneath the tarmac, which seems likely to represent a layer of decayed turf (Fig. 4).

No evidence for archaeological or finds were identified, although it is theoretically possible that these could survive beneath the buried soil. However, since the classroom will have only shallow foundations around the edge of the building and no further ground reduction was taking place, it was determined that no archaeological deposits would be disturbed during the development, even should they exist within the area.

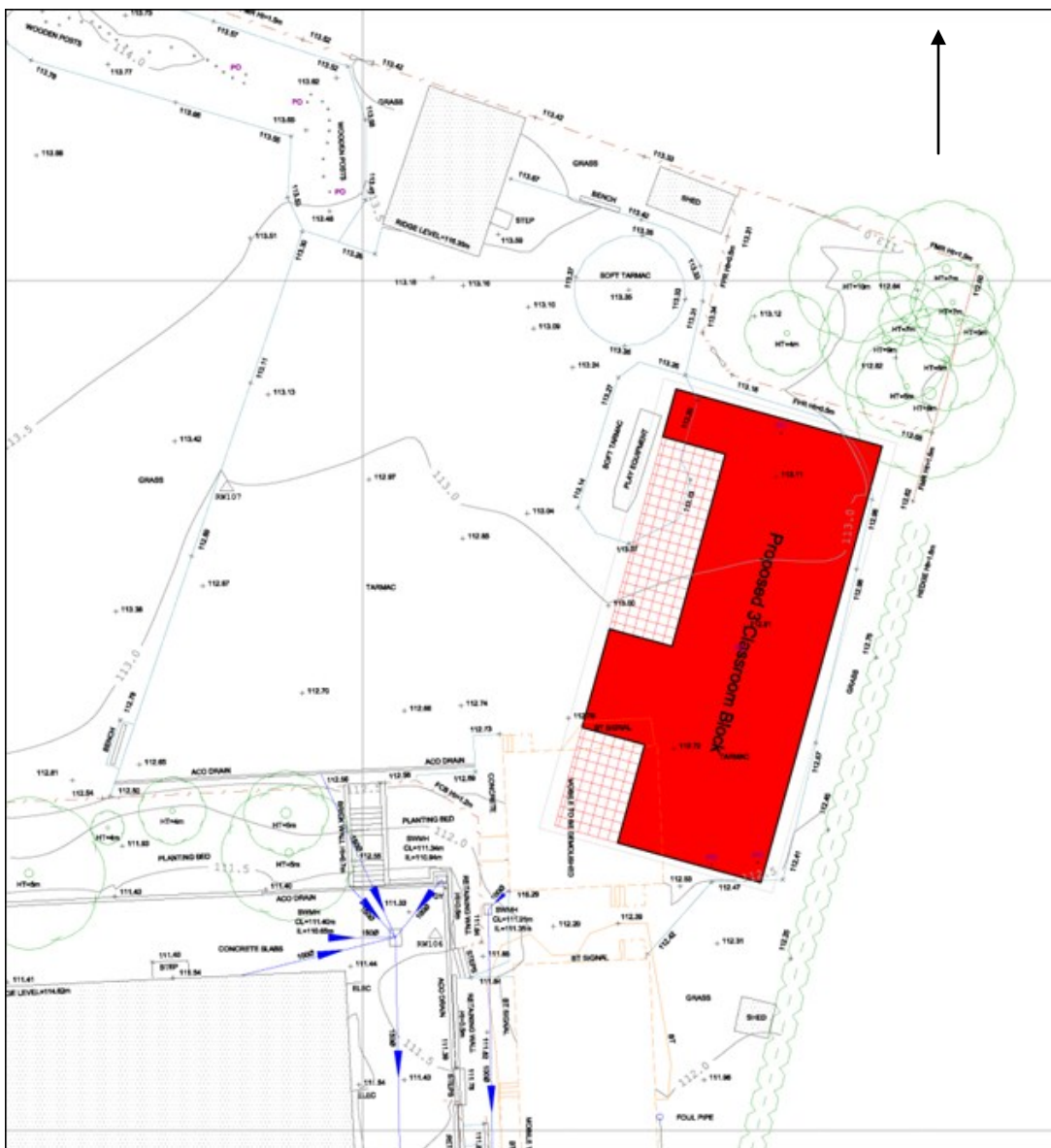


Figure 2: Plan of the development, showing the footprint of the classroom block (shaded) (NTS)



Figure 3: View of strata at the northern end of the strip. Scale is 0.5m.



Figure 4: North-facing view over stripped area, showing buried topsoil (right) and buried turf (left) in the foreground and re-deposited subsoil towards the back

7. Conclusion

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the removal of the former netball court, prior to the construction of a new classroom. The work revealed evidence for levelling beneath the former netball court, indicating that the land had been built up with subsoil at the northern end. At the southern end of the strip, buried topsoil was exposed. Since no further reduction of ground level was planned, it was considered that no archaeology would be disturbed, even should it exist within the development area.

No archaeological deposits were encountered and no finds were recovered during the watching brief.

8. Archive

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services, with the Accession No. X62. 2012

The archive contains site notes (watching brief pro forma sheets), digital photographs and photo index.

The report is listed on the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. Available at: <http://oasis.ac.uk/>

9. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* and *Rutland Record* in due course. The report has been added to the Archaeology Data Service's (ADS) Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York.

10. Bibliography

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11. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by Jennifer Browning for ULAS. Vicki Score managed the project. I would like to thank the Wayne Mears and his team on site for their help and co-operation during the work.

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