



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Watching
Brief During Groundworks
for an Extension to
Gilroes Cemetery,
Leicester
(SK 56559 06680)

Jennifer Browning



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**An Archaeological Watching
Brief during Groundworks for an Extension to
Gilroes Cemetery,
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(SK 56559 06680)**

Jennifer Browning

For

Leicester City Council

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Gilroes Cemetery in Leicester by University of Leicester Archaeological Services in August and September 2011. The site was located on the north-eastern side of the existing cemetery, adjacent to Anstey Lane (SK 56559 06680). No significant archaeological deposits or finds were identified during the course of the work. However, the remains of medieval ridge and furrow agriculture were observed and post-medieval and modern pottery indicates that night soil was spread on the fields. The archive will be held by Leicester City Council under the Accession number A10.2011.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Leicester City Council to carry out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks at Gilroes Cemetery, Anstey Lane, Leicester (SK 56559 06680).

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 required as a condition of the planning consent for an extension to the Gilroes Cemetery, as required by the Planning Authority. This development entails the groundworks for access roads and services.

Location and Geology

The site lies in approximately north east of Leicester city centre, c.5km to the north east of Leicester city centre (Figure 1). The site is located west of the existing cemetery, adjacent to Anstey Lane (Figure 2). It lies at an approximate height of 90m O.D. and the natural substratum consists of Oadby member – Diamicton (superficial) over Edwalton member- mudstone (bedrock) (British Geological Survey).

The site occupies a large field (3.78 ha) generally sloping down towards the south but with the lowest levels across the centre of the field, creating a slight valley. Levels on the site plans indicates that the highest point is the northwest corner at 92.68m OD and the lowest in the centre of the southeast boundary at 83.07m OD. Prior to the works the ground consisted of grazing land. Adjacent to the northwest boundary a wooded area contains remains relating to the former Smallpox hospital.



Figure 1: Site Location

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Historical and Archaeological Background

The Leicester City Sites and Monuments Record indicates that the site lies in an area which has not previously been surveyed archaeologically. However, aerial photography has suggested the presence of a Roman road leading from the North Gate of Leicester to Ratcliffe on Soar. Although the stretch of the route between Leicester and Bradgate Park is speculative, in the absence of any evidence from aerial photographs or excavation, it is believed to have run more or less on the line of the present Anstey Lane (Lycett 1999, 75). The presence of later medieval boundary banks along Anstey Lane along with place name evidence, which suggest a long-distance portage route, emphasises the historic continuity of this route.

Evidence is also recorded on the Leicester SMR for evidence from the Neolithic to medieval periods, including prehistoric stone axes (LC623 and 626), Roman coins (LC1116 and 1117) and an early medieval buckle. Although these could all represent chance losses, recent evaluations to the south at Braunstone and to the north at Mowmacre, in areas of similar geological and topographical character, have identified previously unrecorded archaeological sites.

In the 19th century, the development area lay directly southeast of Leicester Smallpox Hospital. Map evidence suggests that the hospital was built sometime between the 1880s and 1904 and fell into disuse between 1930 and 1954.

Eight 30m by 1.6m trial trenches were excavated prior to a previous extension to the cemetery, west of the current site (Derrick 2001) revealed no archaeological deposits. Some linear anomalies appeared on a preparatory geophysical survey, but were thought to represent the stone land drains revealed in the trenches.

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

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2010) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008). *A Design Specification for Archaeological Work* was produced by ULAS prior to the archaeological work being undertaken.

The project involved the supervision of groundworks by an experienced professional archaeologist during the works. The groundworks consisted of topsoil stripping and ground reduction for the creation of the new access roads, roundabouts and burial areas using a JCB 360, with a ditching bucket and also with a toothed bucket.

Results

The site was visited on five occasions between the 4th August and the 16th September 2011. The groundworks involved topsoil stripping and the creation of terraces to level out the existing slope and enable burials to take place. The area was divided into bays (Figure 3), which were first topsoil stripped, then excavated to depth. These were separated by 1m wide stone-filled gabion cages. Due to the slope of the ground, the areas were excavated to different depths were excavated and at the southern end of the

site, where the ground level was lowest, subsoil was re-deposited to build up the ground to level.

The topsoil consisted of dark brown clayey loam, with frequent charcoal flecks and fragments of coal, flint nodules and chalky stones and was c. 0.2m thick. Modern glazed pottery and china was fairly common in the topsoil, along with occasional brick and tile fragments and fragments of clay pipe stem. A small collection of examples was collected (see Appendix). The subsoil consisted of yellow brown clay with slightly sandy with frequent manganese flecks, chalky inclusions, patches of gravel with frequent flint and small and medium pebbles.

The natural subsoil at the base of the dig consisted of mottled orange/blue clay with frequent inclusions (chalky stone and shale, with occasional flints). The exposed subsoil is orange-brown clay with frequent manganese mottle.

Linear bands of darker soil containing fragments of coal and modern pottery were located on a NNE-SSW alignment located about 6.5m apart. These were on the same orientation as some of the land-drains and are probably the remains of furrows from medieval strip farming.

Two (presumably disused) service trenches were observed on the southern part of the area. One was 0.5m (18'') wide and aligned NNE-SSW. It was located close to the western boundary of the site. The second crossed the southern part of the site on a NW- SE orientation, heading towards the former smallpox hospital and presumably associated with it. Near the edge of the dig, a fragment of sewer pipe had been displaced from the trench.

Examination of the stripped surface on the western part of the area was straightforward, however the change from a ditching to a toothed bucket on the eastern side of the site made it more difficult to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains, as this method breaks up the soil surface.

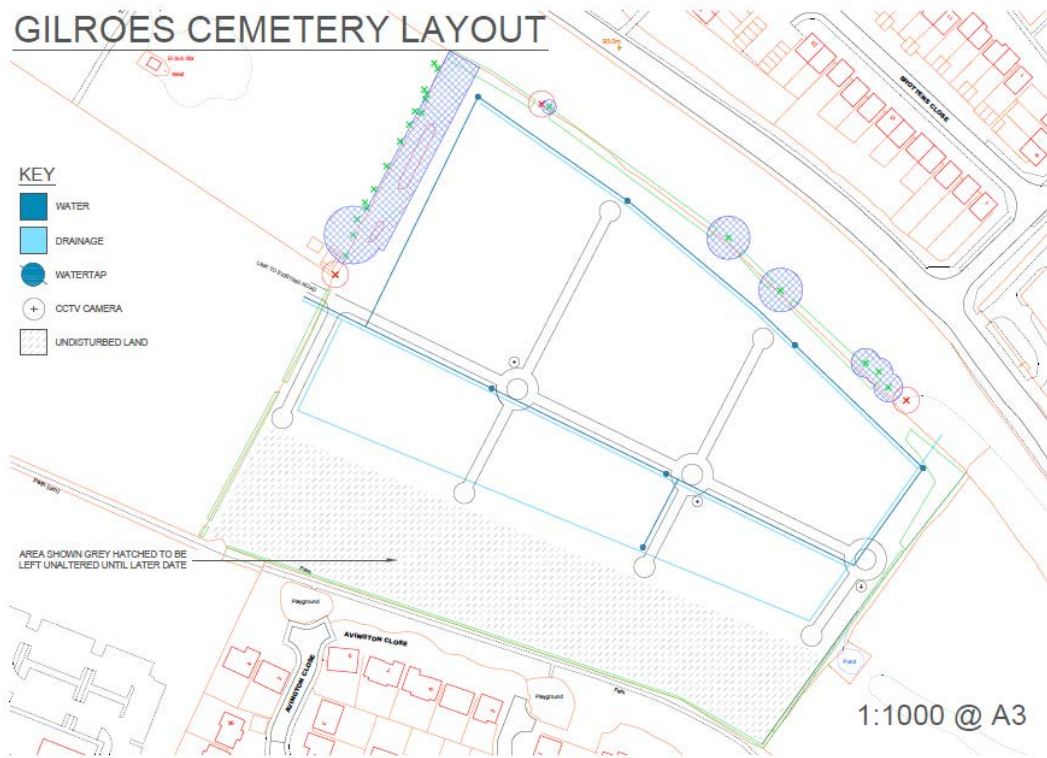


Figure 2: Plan of development, indicating the location of the new foundation trenches, which are shaded more lightly (plan supplied by client) (NTS)



Figure 3: Example of the stripped surface, showing a service trench aligned NNE-SSW

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the site is located in an area of archaeological potential, no significant archaeological deposits or finds were encountered during the course of the work. However, the remains of northeast/southwest aligned furrows were observed, representing medieval strip farming. The quantity and variety of pottery sherds observed within the topsoil and subsoil suggest that the 'night soil' was spread on the fields as manure in the post-medieval and modern periods (see Appendix).

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Tony Maxfield of Leicester City Council Landscape Services and the contractors on site for their help and co-operation during the work. Deborah Sawday identified the pottery and the project was managed by Richard Buckley.

References

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Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Services under the Accession number A10 2011 and consists of the following:

Digital photographs

Black and white contact prints and negatives

Photo Index

Site notes

1 bag of pottery

Oasis Summary

INFORMATION REQUIRED	
Project Name	Gilroes Cemetery
Project Type	Watching brief
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Jennifer Browning
Previous/Future work	-
Current Land Use	Field
Development Type	Burial ground
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	Condition of planning consent
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK 5655 0668
Start/end dates of field work	04.08.11- 16.09.12
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Study Area	c. 3.8 hectares

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Appendix I: The Post Roman Pottery And Miscellaneous Finds From A Watching Brief At Gilroes Cemetery, Leicester

Deborah Sawday

The Finds

The pottery, thirteen sherds, weighing 496 grams, was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group, (MPRG 1998), (MPRG, 2001) and the ULAS fabric series (Sawday 1989; Sawday 2010). Single fragments of roofing or nib tile and clay tobacco pipe were also present. The results are shown below (table 1). All of the material was post medieval or modern in date, the later material in particular was probably deposited as ‘night soil’ from the nearby village of Glenfield, but with the surviving evidence of ridge and furrow (J. Browning, pers. comm.) of all the finds may represent the manuring of what were formerly open fields.

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 Woodfield, P. 1984 ‘Midland Yellow Wares’ *Newsletter West Midlands Pottery Research Group 2*

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

Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos	Grams	Comments
POT				
MY	Midland Yellow	2	29	Joining sherds from the base and lower body of a rounded vessel with a foot-ring, possibly a cup (Woodfield 1981, form H). Transparent lead glaze firing yellow over buff body, imperfections showing as brown specks in glaze, but pot well-finished. Probably dates to the end of MY production in early 18th C.
U/S	EA2	2	24	Jar rim with stacking evidence on rim top slipped and glazed internally, & misc. body sherd - 18th C +
U/S	EA2 – Earthenware 2	1	124	Wide mouthed bowl/pancheon rim, slipped &

				glazed internally. Similar at Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire, one possible source dated to the 17th C, (Mayes & Scott 1984, fig.86.729).
U/S	EA2	1	42	Jar rim, brown glaze internally, post medieval/modern.
U/S	EA2	2	37	Misc. body/base fragments
U/S	EA7 - Slipware	1	8	Press moulded dish fragment with traces of iron rich slip trailed decoration and lead glaze, firing orange & yellow over buff body.
U/S	SW5 – Brown salt Glazed Stoneware	2	166	Two joining fragments – complete base of cylindrical wheel thrown bottle, grey body with iron rich slip & salt glaze on exterior, white slip on interior. Modern
U/S	SW5	1	15	Body similar to the above, but part of a different vessel of unknown type.
U/S	SW - Stoneware	1	51	Rim, neck & pulled pouring lip – part of a shouldered vessel, possibly a jug. Pale grey slip internally & externally – modern.
TILE				
U/S	EA - Earthenware	1	55	Fragment of a nib tile – with pulled peg to suspend from lathe of roof, rough side uppermost (Allin 1981). Sooting probably post-depositional. Post medieval.
CLAY PIPE				
U/S	China Clay	2		Stem from tobacco pipe – post medieval/modern.

Site/ Parish: Gilroes Cemetery, Leicester Accession No.: A10 2011 Document Ref: gilroes cemetery1.docx Material: pottery & tile Site Type: open ground, evidence of ridge & furrow pos. relating to Glenfield?.	Submitter: J. Browning Identifier: D. sawday Date of Identification: 15.06.12 Method of Recovery: watching brief Job Number: 11-105
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