



**University of  
Leicester**

**Archaeological Services**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief During  
Groundworks For A New Link Pathway  
At Leicester Castle, Castle Ward,  
Leicester (NGR SK 5824 0416)**

**Scheduled Monument No: SM 17127, HA 1012147  
English Heritage SMC Ref: S00056186**

Jennifer Browning



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*Jennifer Browning*

**For:  
Franklin Ellis Architects on behalf of Leicester City Council**

Approved by:

Signed:



Date: 7 October 2013

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### **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for a new link pathway at Leicester Castle between the castle yard and the motte (NGR: SK 5824 0416). The Castle and surrounding area are a Scheduled Monument No: SM 17127, HA 1012147 and therefore consent for the work was required from English Heritage (SMC ref: S00056186). The work involved the excavation of a trench for a new wall footing and several post holes to the rear of No.5 Castle View. No archaeological deposits were disturbed by the groundworks, however, it did help to confirm the depth of such deposits to help inform any future work. Artefacts related to post-medieval/modern activity were recovered from garden soils. The archive will be held by Leicester City Council under the Accession Number A10 2013.*

### **1. Introduction**

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with a new link pathway within the scheduled area of Leicester Castle, (Scheduled Monument No: SM 17127, HA 1012147). The work was carried out in August 2013 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services. The work resulted from a Conservation Management Plan commissioned by Leicester City Council in January 2008 to support the development of a sustainable future for Leicester Castle Great Hall and the adjacent Castle View properties (Atkins Heritage 2008). Subsequently, Leicester Arts and Museum Services Department of Leicester City Council commissioned Franklin Ellis Architects to prepare and submit a new footpath link scheme set within the grounds of the Leicester Castle Complex to enable the motte to be accessed from Castle Yard.

English Heritage and the City Archaeologist for Leicester City Council recommended that archaeological monitoring should be undertaken to determine if any buried deposits were likely to be affected by the proposed development. The archaeological work is required by English Heritage, as the proposed works impact upon a Scheduled Monument (SM 17127, HA 1012147). A Scheduled Monument Consent application was granted subject to archaeological monitoring of the groundworks. A strategy for a programme of archaeological work was set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (Browning 2013), hereinafter WSI.



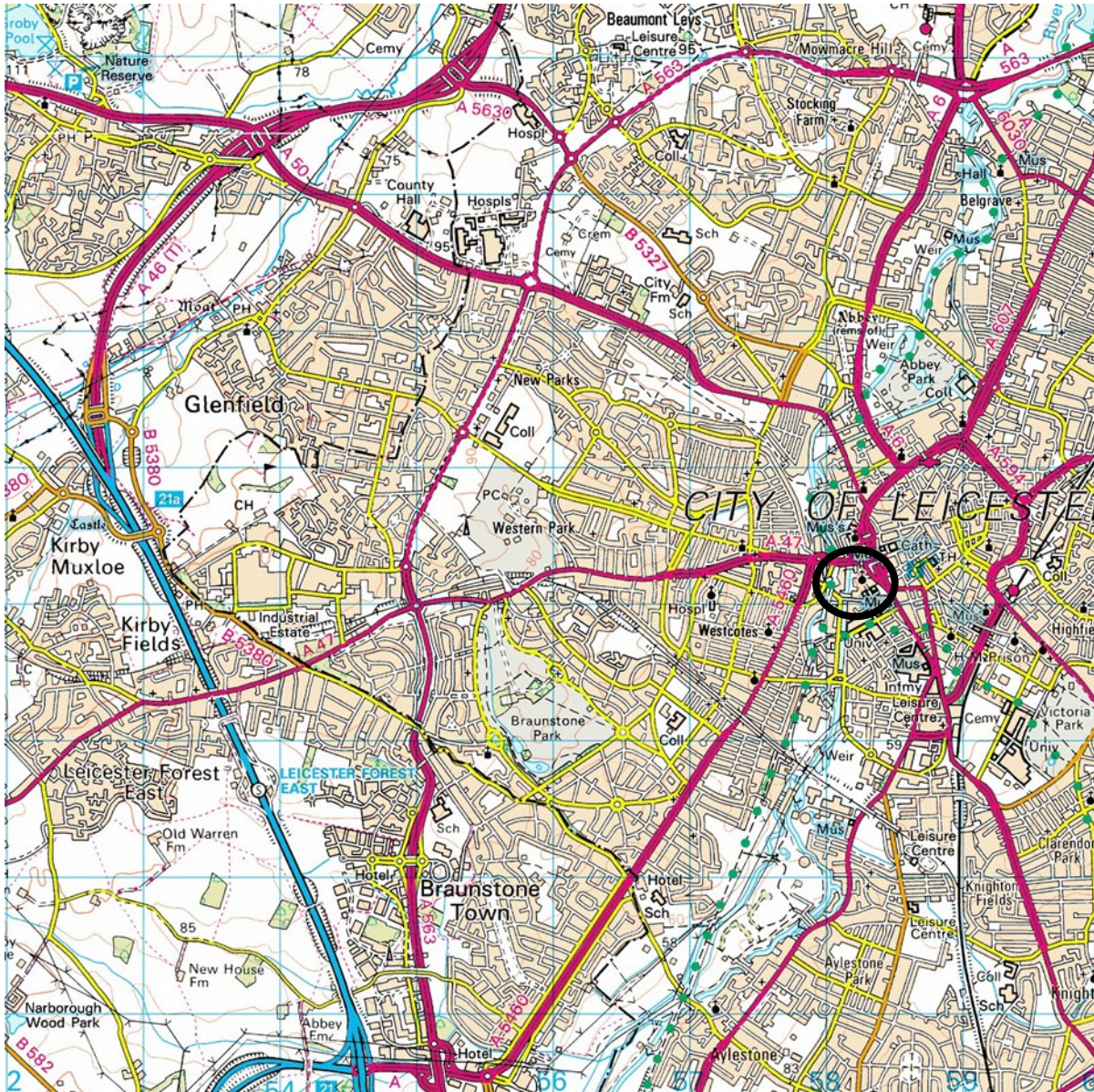


Figure 1: Location plan Scale 1:50000

Reproduced from Landranger OS map 140 Leicester, Coventry and Rugby area: 50 000 by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495.

## 2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

Leicester Castle is located to the west of the city centre, south of St. Nicholas Circle and north of De Montfort University. The development area is located within the castle precinct and comprises an area of lawn, which was formerly part of the walled garden of No. 5 Castle View and the base of the castle motte, within Castle Park.

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the bedrock geology consists of mudstone of the Branscombe Formation. No superficial geology was recorded. (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (Accessed on 2013)).

### 3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The castle complex is designated as a single Scheduled Monument, comprising both standing and sub-surface features (National Monument Number 17127 (NGR SK 58270416 and SK 5844 0411)). All of the buildings and structures are owned and maintained by Leicester City Council. The first castle of motte and bailey type was constructed in c.1068 by Hugh de Grentmesnil. This comprised a large earthen mound or motte encircled by a large ditch, on top of which would have been a timber tower, and a bailey containing a hall, chapel, stables and other buildings. The height of the motte was reduced in the early 19th century to create a bowling green. The bailey was probably defended by an earth bank with timber palisade, fronted by a large ditch. The latter has been traced by excavation. In the early 12th century, it is likely that Robert de Beaumont, the first earl, added a stone wall to the front of the bailey rampart and it is conceivable that other buildings were reconstructed in stone at this time. A full history of the castle complex can be found in the Leicester Castle and Castle View Conservation Plan (Atkins 2008).

The proposed works lie approximately on the line of the ditch which would have encircled the motte, thought to have been backfilled in the late 12th or early 13th century following the sack of Leicester by Henry II in 1173. Upon the backfilled ditch, there was also potential for later medieval structures within the bailey.

In 1996 a desk-based assessment, field survey and evaluation was carried out (Buckley and Finn 1996), which considered the archaeological implications of the conversion of alterations proposed in the early 1990s to the Great Hall, Undercroft and Motte of Leicester Castle. The scheme included a proposed access to the motte staircase via the back garden of 5 Castle View. To assess the impact of the proposals on buried archaeological remains, three trial pits each measuring 2m x 1m were excavated to the proposed formation depth in the garden of 5, Castle View. These revealed 18th-century layers and garden soils to a depth of 0.8m, a possible post-medieval wall footing and medieval finds (Buckley and Finn 1996, 19). A further test pit located just outside the fence surrounding the southern entrance to the Undercroft revealed a series of deposits containing 18th century material, which were interpreted as slippage from the motte (Buckley and Finn 1996, 20).

On the basis that evaluative work had already been undertaken in 1996 and had indicated that the impact of the proposed access was likely to be minimal, it was agreed by the City Archaeologist and English Heritage that an archaeological watching brief should be maintained during groundworks. A written scheme of investigation (WSI ULAS 2013) was duly prepared by ULAS .providing details of the methodologies to be adopted.



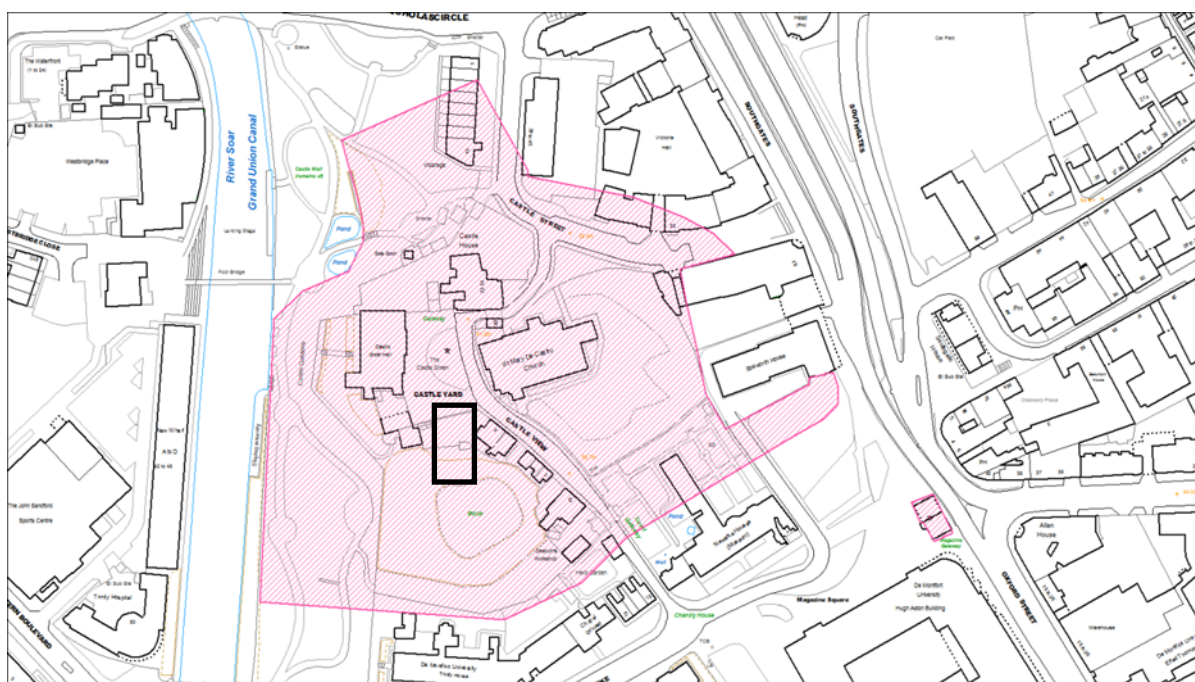


Figure 2: Location of the proposed works within the Scheduled area  
(plan supplied by Leicester City Archaeologist)

#### 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 WSI (Browning 2013) 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). In order to effectively determine the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits

The programme of work which required a watching brief comprised the excavation of a wall footing and seven post holes. The excavations were visually inspected, hand-cleaned where appropriate and recorded following standard ULAS methods.

## 6. Results

The site was visited on the 8th, 13th and 14th August 2013. The new footpath was to cross the garden formerly belonging to No 5 Castle View and consequently it was necessary to build a new garden wall to screen the property from the footpath. The trench measured 0.7m wide and was orientated north-south, spanning the width of the garden (see Figure 4). It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m at the northern end but was only 0.5m deep at the southern end. Topsoil was 0.2m thick and consisted of dark brown rich humic sandy loam, with common root disturbance and occasional small stones. The overburden/garden soil was mid grey brown silty sand, friable in texture and containing moderate charcoal flecks and occasional small fragments of brick/tile, slate, mortar and occasional small stones (context 2). This was the extent of the excavations at the southern (shallower) end of the trench. At the northern end a further deposit was exposed at a depth of 0.55m below ground level. This consisted of mid-orange brown sandy silt, with moderate to frequent mortar fragments, occasional slate fragments and occasional charcoal flecks (context 3).

Six new post holes were excavated by hand to accommodate the new posts supporting the walkway as it joined the new footpath to the existing steps on the side of the motte. Three were excavated on the northern side of the garden wall and a further three close to the steps at the base of the motte. These measured approximately 0.38 x 0.38m and were excavated to a depth of 0.55-0.6m deep. The holes were visually inspected and the spoil heaps were checked for artefacts. The first group of three (located in the former garden of No 5 Castle View) did not expose any archaeological deposits. Topsoil was 0.25m thick below which was garden soil/overburden to base (as previously observed in the footing trench).

An opening was made in the southern garden wall, which revealed a section through the strata at the base of the motte. This showed that the ground level was 0.6m higher than north of the wall (Figure 7). Topsoil was 0.2m thick, consisting of mid brown silty loam with frequent roots, below which was overburden/garden soil comprising mid-orange brown silty sand with frequent roots and occasional stones, flints and mortar fragments.

The second group of three post holes were excavated immediately south of the existing steps. Observations of post holes 4 and 6, indicated that the deposits consisted of topsoil 0.2m thick, which overlay garden soil, as described, to the base of the holes. A variation was noted in post hole 5, located slightly higher on the motte, where a deposit consisting of mid reddish brown clay, mixed with grey mudstone and occasional charcoal flecks (context 4), was encountered at 0.45m below ground level. This could potentially represent an archaeological level but it was difficult to be certain in such a small hole.

A small quantity of pottery and tile, as well as animal bone, was recovered predominantly from the garden soils in the wall footing. None was recovered from the deeper deposits. This was post medieval or modern in date; only a fragment of roof tile is earlier, possibly medieval or maybe post medieval in date (D. Sawday, Appendix 1).



Context	Description
1	Topsoil
2	Garden soil
3	Deposit at the base of the wall footing. Mid-orange brown sandy silt, with moderate to frequent mortar fragments, occasional slate fragments and occasional charcoal flecks
4	Deposit at the base of post hole 6. Mid reddish brown clay, with grey mudstone flecks and occasional charcoal flecks

Table 1: Description of deposits noted during the work

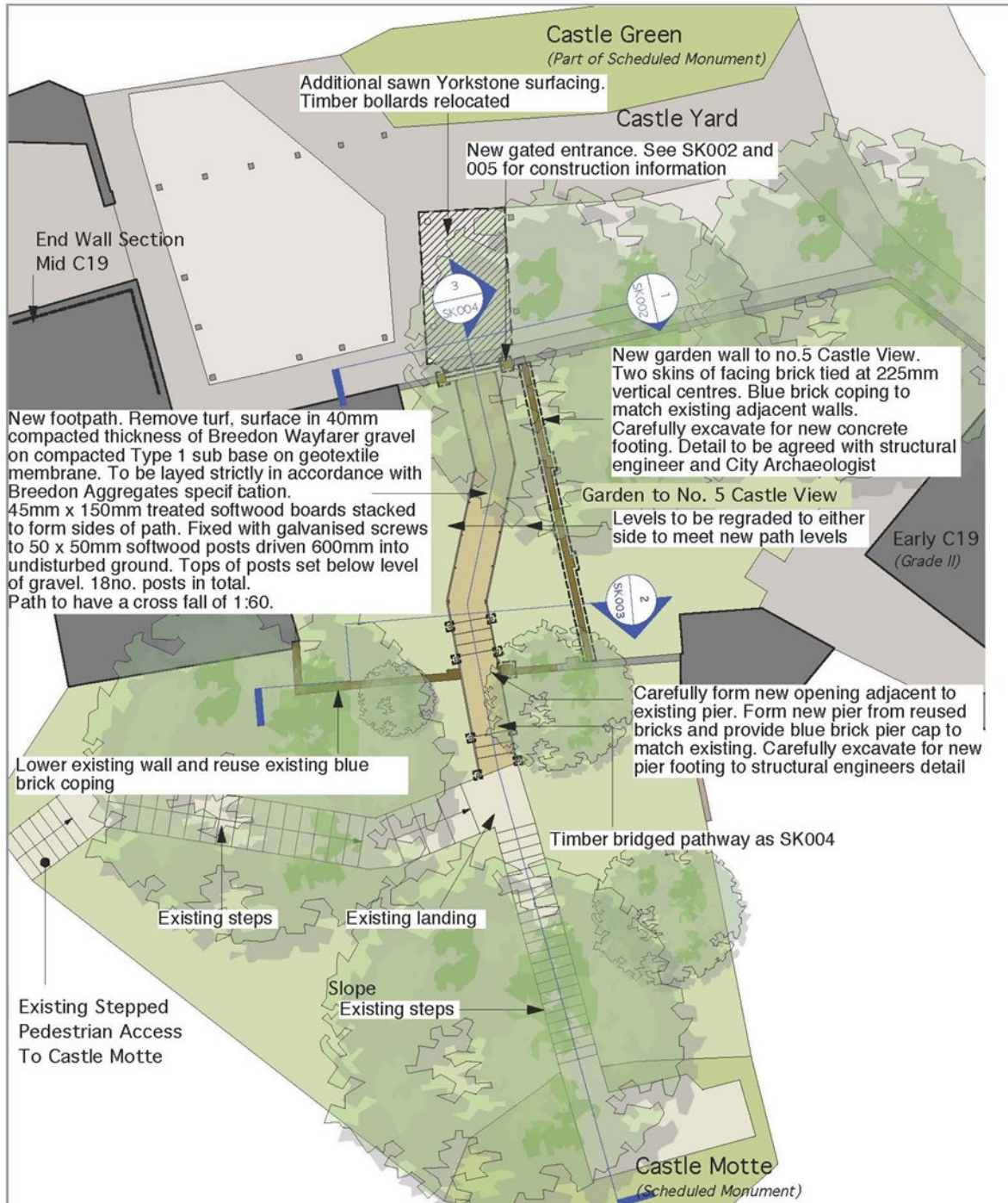


Figure 3: Plan of scheme (Franklin Ellis Architects)

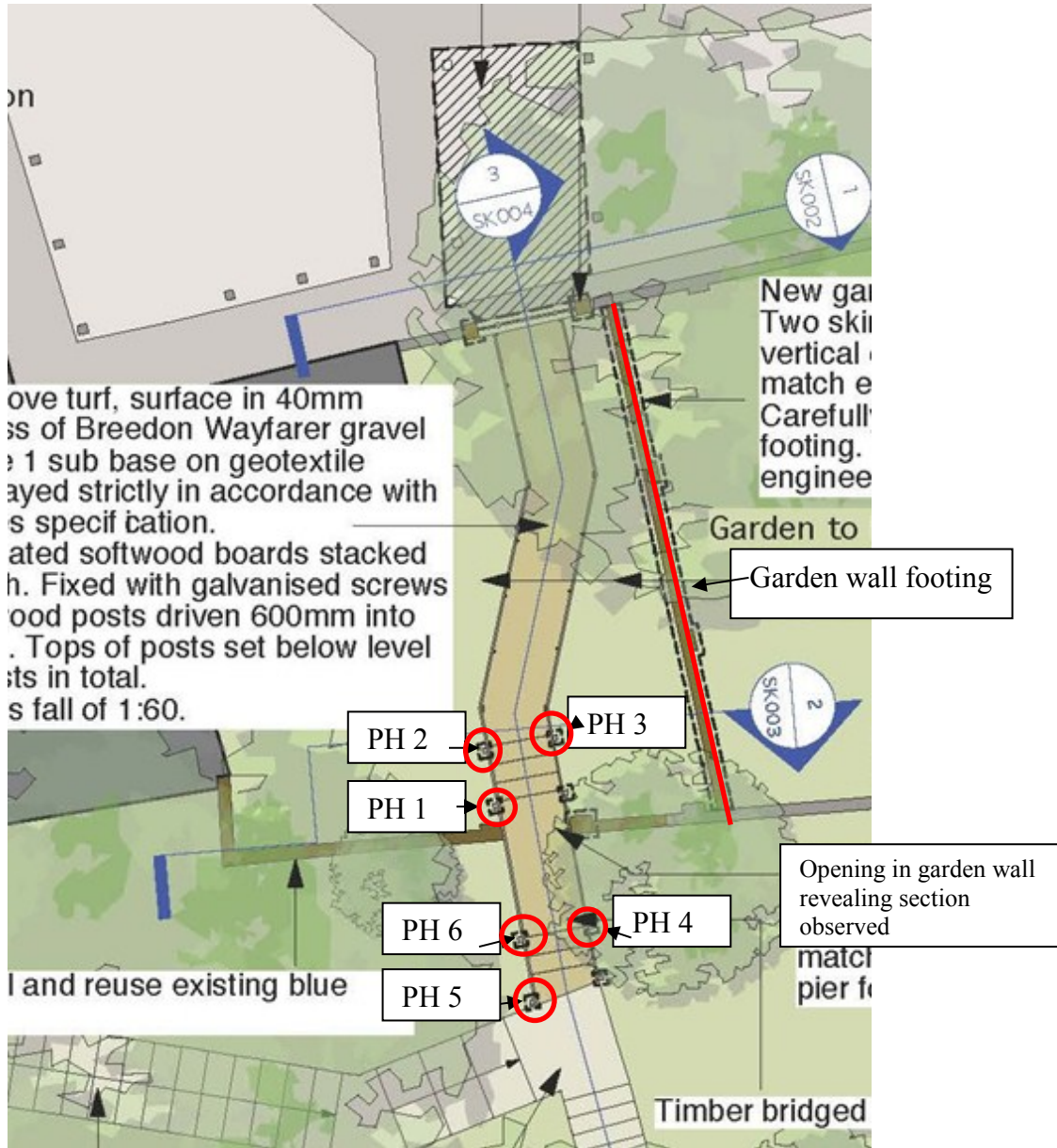


Figure 4: Detail of scheme, showing areas watched





Figure 5: Trench section at southern end of wall footing. Looking east.



Figure 6: Trench sections at the northern end of wall footing. Looking east.



Figure 7: Cross section through the build-up behind the garden wall. Post holes 1-3 in foreground. Looking south.





Figure 8: Overview of post holes 4, 5 and 6. Looking south-east.



Figure 9: Post hole showing depth of deposit at the base. Looking south.

## 7. Conclusion

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Leicester Castle during groundworks for a new link footpath. The work was located in the area between the castle green and the motte and included the excavation of a wall footing and several post holes. No archaeological deposits were disturbed during the work, which were mostly excavated through garden soils



to a depth of c.0.55m below ground level. The potential for archaeological deposits exists below this level. Pottery and tile recovered from the garden soil confirmed a post-medieval or modern date for the deposit. However, a fragment of medieval (or possibly post-medieval) tile was indicative of earlier building in the vicinity. A number of animal bones, including the distal femur of a peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*), were recovered from the garden soil.

## 8. Archive

The site archive will be held by Leicester City Council, under the Accession No: A10 2013

The archive contains site notes (watching brief pro forma sheets), digital photographs and photo index and finds as listed in the Appendix.

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 will be added to the Archaeology Data Service's (ADS) Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York.

### OASIS Information

Project Name	Leicester Castle Link Pathway
Project Type	Archaeological Watching Brief
Project Manager	R. Buckley
Project Supervisor	J. Browning
Previous/Future work	Previous
Current Land Use	Garden
Development Type	New footpath
Reason for Investigation	Scheduled Monument Consent
Position in the Planning Process	completed
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK5824 0416
Start/end dates of field work	08.08.2013 to 14-08-2013
Archive Recipient	Leicester City Council
Study Area	c. 60 square metres

## 10. Bibliography

Atkins Heritage 2008 *Leicester Castle & Castle View Properties Conservation Management Plan*

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

Browning, J. 2013 *Written scheme of investigation for archaeological work at Leicester Castle, Leicester (NGR: SK 578 088)*

Buckley, R. and Finn, N 1996 *Leicester Castle, Conversion into Museum and Visitor Centre: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, field survey and evaluation*. Unpub. ULAS Report 1996-053

Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), (rev. 2012), *Code of Conduct*

Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), (rev. 2008), *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

## **11. Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork and animal bone identification was carried out by Jennifer Browning for ULAS. Deborah Sawday identified the pottery and Richard Buckley managed the project. I would like to thank Jason Clarke of G. F. Tomlinson and his team for their help and co-operation during the work.

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## **Appendix 1: The Post Roman Pottery and Miscellaneous Finds from a Watching Brief at Leicester Castle.**

*Deborah Sawday*

### **The Finds**

All of the finds listed below (Table 1) were recovered from the garden soil, context 2, which had been disturbed by modern excavations prior to building work.

#### ***The Pottery and Ceramic Building Material***

The pottery, nine sherds, weighing 216 grams was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG, 2001) and the ULAS fabric series (Sawday 1989), (Davies and Sawday 1999), (Sawday 2009).

One fragment of moulded flat roof tile, *circa* 15-19mm thick, was also recovered in a red sandy ware indicative of origins in the tile manufacturing centres based in Chilvers Coton or Coventry. The tile lacks any diagnostic features and may be either medieval or early post medieval in date (Mayes and Scott 1984) (Ratkai and Woodfield 2005).

#### ***The Clay Tobacco Pipe***

Part of tobacco pipe bowl and two tobacco pipe stems were recorded. A copy of a briar pipe with similar moulded decoration on the bowl has been dated to c.1850-1910 in London (Groves 1984, no.30).

### **Conclusions**

Most of the finds are post medieval or modern in date –suggesting that archaeological levels have not been disturbed by the current excavations. Only the roof tile is possibly medieval if not post medieval in date.

### **Bibliography**

Davies, S. and Sawday, D. 2004 'Medieval and Later Pottery and Tile' in N. Finn 2004, *The Origins of a Leicester Suburb: Roman, Anglo Saxon, medieval and post-medieval occupation on Bonners Lane*. B.A.R. (British Series) 372, 86-99

Groves, J., 1984 *Guide to the DUA Clay Tobacco Pipe Type Series* Museum of London Department of Urban Archaeology

Mayes, P., and Scott, K., 1984 *Pottery kilns at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton*. Soc. Medieval Archaeol. Mon. Ser. 10.

MPRG, 2001 *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Saxon and Medieval Ceramics*

Ratkai, S., and Woodfield, C. 2005 'Roof Tile' in C. Woodfield 2005

Sawday, D. 2009 'The medieval and post medieval pottery and tile' in J. Coward and G. Speed, *Urban Life in Leicester: An Archaeological Excavation at Freeschool Lane*. Vol 2 *Specialist Reports* ULAS Report No.2009-140 v2, 36-182

Woodfield, C. 2005 *The Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and some Conventual Buildings at the Whitefriars, Coventry*, BAR British Series **389**

Table 1: The pottery and miscellaneous finds by fabric/material, fragment numbers and weight (grams) by context

Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos	Grams	Comments
POT				
2 garden soil (excavated for wall footing)	EA1 – Earthenware 1	1	47	Slipped and glazed black internally, lead glaze externally. Early post medieval.
2	EA2 – Earthenware 2	1	60	Wide mouthed bowl/pancheon rim slipped and glazed internally. Post medieval/modern.
2	EA2	2	45	Body. Slipped and glazed internally.
2	EA6 – Black ware	1	27	Base, glazed on interior & exterior, c.1650-1750.
2	EA9 – Pearl ware	1	14	Wheel thrown base fragment, vessel type unknown, c.1750-1820.
2	EA10 – Fine White Earthenware	1	2	Transfer printed blue under glaze - modern
PH 1-3 2 (excavated for post holes)	EA2	1	20	Body. Slipped and glazed internally. Post medieval/modern
PH 1-3 2	SW4 – White Salt Glazed Stoneware	1	1	Stacking scar on exterior, c.1720-1780.
CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL				
2	EA – Unclassified Earthenware	1	187	Moulded roof tile, no evidence for nib
CLAY PIPE				
2	China Clay	1		Part of tobacco pipe bowl and stem. Similar copy of a briar pipe, with moulded decoration dated c.1850-1910 (Groves 1984, no.30).
PH 1-3 2	China Clay	1		Tobacco pipe stem fragment, post medieval/modern.

Site/ Parish: Leicester Castle Accession No.: A10 2013 Document Ref: leicester castle2.docx Material: pottery & miscellaneous finds Site Type: castle grounds	Submitter: J. Browning Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Identification: 22.09.2013 Method of Recovery: watching brief Job Number: 13/038
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## Appendix 2: The Animal Bones from a Watching Brief at Leicester Castle

*Jennifer Browning*

During the excavations of the wall footing, 35 animal bone fragments were retrieved from the garden soil. Since this deposit was neither discrete nor securely dated and therefore probably derived from a variety of sources, these bones were not subjected to full analysis. A brief scan of the bones indicated that they are well-preserved and represent a number of different species. The remains were predominantly from sheep/goat however pig, cattle and cat bones were also represented. Several of the sheep/goat and cattle bones exhibited butchery, of which saw marks appeared particularly common. Since the saw was not widely used in butchery before the 18th century, this indicates a modern origin for the bones. Bird bones including domestic fowl and goose were also recovered. Of particular note was the distal femur of a peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*), identified using comparative material in the reference collection held by the School of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Leicester. In the medieval period, the consumption of peafowl was confined to wealthy households (Serjeantson 2009, 311), therefore it is very fitting that this specimen was recovered from work at Leicester Castle, although unfortunate that it is not from a well-dated context.

Serjeantson, D. 2009 *Birds* Cambridge Manuals in Archaeology Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

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