



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Blaby Hall Farm and Mews,
Church Street, Blaby,
Leicestershire.
NGR: SP 5707 9773**

Andrew Hyam



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**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Blaby Hall Farm and Mews,
Church Street, Blaby.**

NGR: 5707 9773

Andrew Hyam

For: Everards Brewery Ltd

Approved by:

Signed:



Date:17.10.2012

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Blaby Hall Farm and Mews, Church Street, Blaby, Leicestershire. The work took place on the 21st of September 2012 during initial foundation work prior to full foundation excavation and groundworks at a later unspecified date. The work took place within the grounds of the Grade II listed Blaby Hall and lies within the historic core of the village. The groundworks were in preparation for a three-storey office extension linked to the existing hall.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the evaluation.

The fieldwork was carried out by A.R.Hyam. The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession Number X.A85.2012

Introduction

In accordance with NPPF (Section 12 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment) this document forms the report for an archaeological watching brief at Blaby Hall Farm and Mews, Blaby Hall, Church Street, Blaby, Leicestershire, NGR: SP 5707 9773. Under planning application (re-submission) number 09/0465/1/PX it is proposed that a three-storey office extension, a covered link to the hall, car park and access alterations will be constructed within the grounds of the Grade II listed Blaby Hall.

When considering the planning application the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to the planning authority, recommended the requirement for an archaeological watching brief to take place due to the site's location within an area of archaeological interest. The work has been commissioned by Everards Brewery Limited and followed that specified in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work at Blaby Hall Farm and Mews, Church street, Blaby, Leicestershire* (ULAS 19.9.2012 – hereinafter WSI).

Background

The village of Blaby lies approximately 7km to the south-west of the city of Leicester (Fig. 1). The development site is centred on National Grid Reference SP 5707 9773 at a height of approximately 79m OD (Fig. 2). The ULAS WSI states that the site lies within an area of archaeological interest within the historic village core of medieval Blaby and to the south of the late 13th/early 14th century church. A ULAS

archaeological desk-based assessment showed that Blaby Hall is a Grade II listed building constructed in 1838 at the same time as Blaby Hall Mews. The main hall building occupies the site of a former medieval manor house. The nearby farmhouse, which is also Grade II listed, is a multi-phase building with its earliest elements dating to the mid 15th century. The location of the proposed development therefore suggested that there would be a relatively high potential for the presence of below ground archaeological deposits.

The proposed development will include a three-storey office extension connected to the main hall by a covered link, a car park and some access alterations (Fig. 3). However, the purpose of this phase of work was to watch the excavation of a 2m² foundation base for a concrete foundation pad in the south-east corner of the extension. The remaining foundations and groundwork will commence at a later date.

The south-eastern pad was located within an area of lawn located behind a shrubbery border screening off the formal front garden (Fig. 4). A small car park lies to the east and north of the lawn. The hall and lawn are on a level terrace which overlooks a gentle slope down to the road.

The British Geological Survey indicates that the underlying bedrock is likely to be Branscombe Mudstone Formation and the superficial geology is Wigston Member sand and gravel.

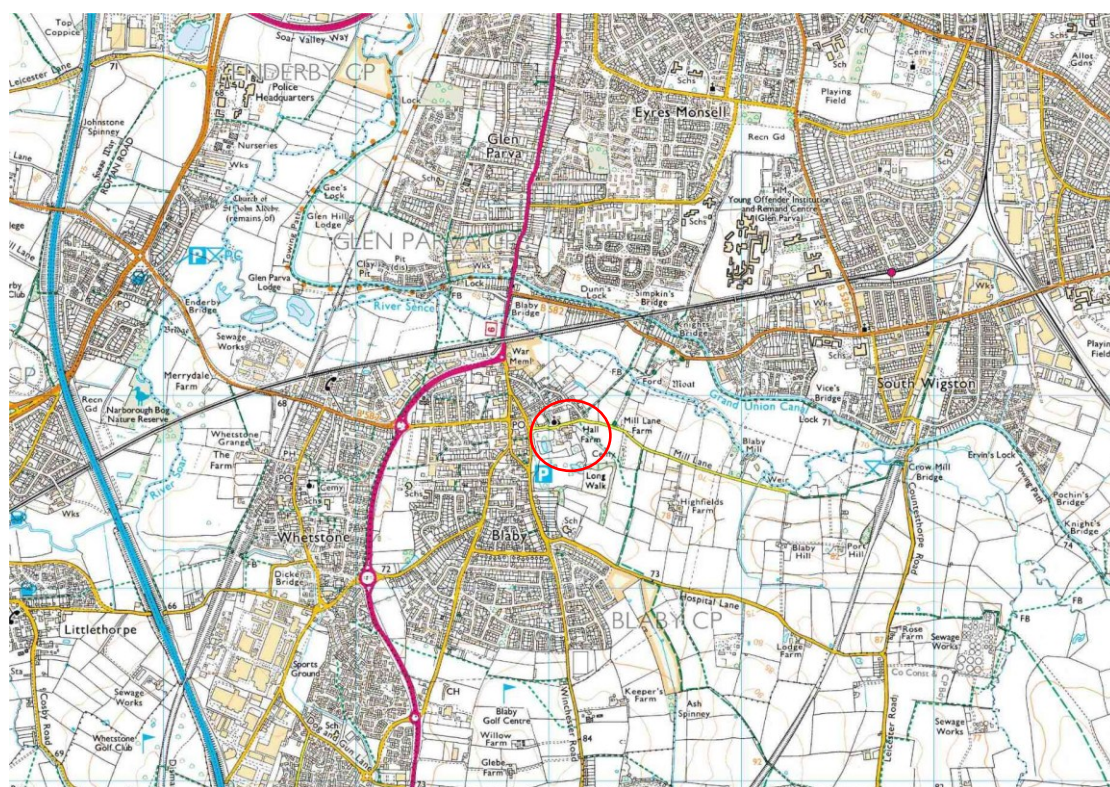


Figure 1. Blaby location
1km grid. North to top of map. Site area highlighted

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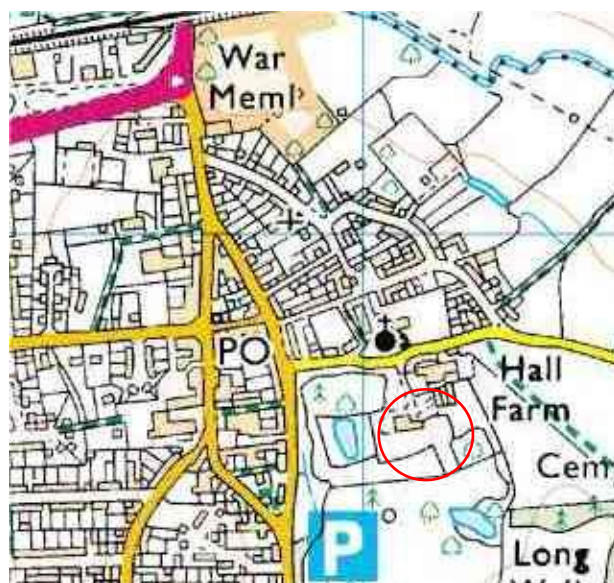


Figure 2. Site location
1km grid. North to top of map

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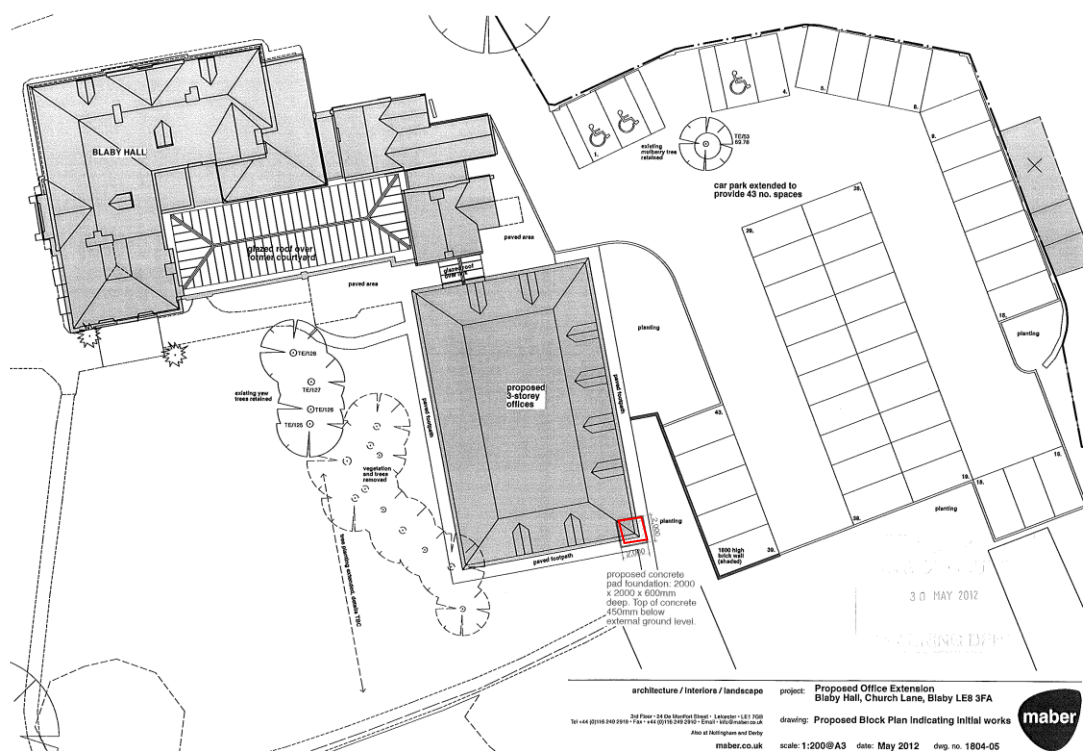


Figure 3. Proposed development plan
Plan supplied by client. Foundation base highlighted in red

Objectives

The main objectives of the watching brief as identified in the ULAS WSI can be summarised as:

- To identify the presence/absence of any or 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.

Methodology

A tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to excavate the 2m² pad foundation base. Topsoil/modern overburden and subsoil was removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the top of natural. The foundation trench was examined by hand cleaning and any deposits located would be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by. All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Sections of any excavated archaeological features would be drawn at an appropriate scale. The groundworks and foundation trenches were recorded on standard ULAS pro-forma watching brief recording sheets noting soil depths and descriptions. Any drawn sections of archaeological features would be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum.

All 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 WSI. All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2006) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological watching briefs* (2008).

Results

Approximately 0.35m of dark brown clayish sandy silt topsoil was removed to reveal a further 0.45m of mid greyish brown clayish sand subsoil. Removal of the subsoil exposed a clean and undisturbed mid orange brown sandy clay natural substratum. The foundation pad was then excavated to a total depth of 1.2m (Fig 5). No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the 2m² excavation.



Figure 4. Location of foundation trench
Trench is next to excavator. Facing west



Figure 5. East facing section of excavated foundation base
1m scale, looking west

Discussion

The lawn area appears to be slightly higher than the surrounding ground leading to the possible expectation of the proposed development being on made ground. This does not appear to be the case and the natural substratum would seem to remain undisturbed. This initial phase of the watching brief however did not reveal any archaeological features or deposits.

Archive

The archive consists of:

This report,

1 pro-forma watching brief recording form,

1 photographic record sheet,

5 digital photographs,

1 cd of 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).

IfA, 2008, *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

ULAS 2012. *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological attendance, inspection and recording (watching brief). Blaby Hall Farm and Mews, Church Street, Blaby.*

Appendix 1. OASIS Information

Project Name	Blaby Hall Farm and Mews, Church St, Blaby
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	P Clay
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	Continuation of w/b when work restarts
Current Land Use	Garden
Development Type	Commercial
Reason for Investigation	As a condition
Position in the Planning Process	Ongoing
Site Co ordinates	SP 5707 9773
Start/end dates of field work	21.9.12
Archive Recipient	LCC
Study Area	50m ²

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