



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief During
Tree Planting at Cutts Close, Oakham Castle,
Oakham, Rutland,
(NGR SK 8617 0903)**

**Scheduled Monument No:17018
English Heritage SMC Ref: S00045833**

Jennifer Browning



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Tree Planting at Cutts Close, Oakham Castle, Oakham, Rutland
(NGR SK 86200 08950)**

**Scheduled Monument No: SM 17018, HA
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For: Oakham Town Council

Approved by:



Signed:

Date: 7th January 2013

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of holes for four new oak trees and two replacement lime trees at Cutts Close, Oakham (NGR: SK 861 090). The site is part of the scheduled area for Oakham Castle SM 17018, List Entry No 1010702) and therefore consent for the work was required from English Heritage (SMC ref: S00045833). No archaeological deposits were disturbed by the groundworks. The archive will be held by Rutland County Council under the Accession Number OAKRM:2013.37.

1. Introduction

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during the excavation of six tree holes at Cutts Close, within the scheduled area of Oakham Castle, (Scheduled Monument No: SM 17018, List Entry No: 1010702). The work was carried out in December 2013 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services for Oakham Town Council.

English Heritage 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 17018). A Scheduled Monument Consent application was granted subject to archaeological monitoring of the groundworks (S00045833). A strategy for a programme of archaeological work was set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (Score 2013), hereinafter WSI.

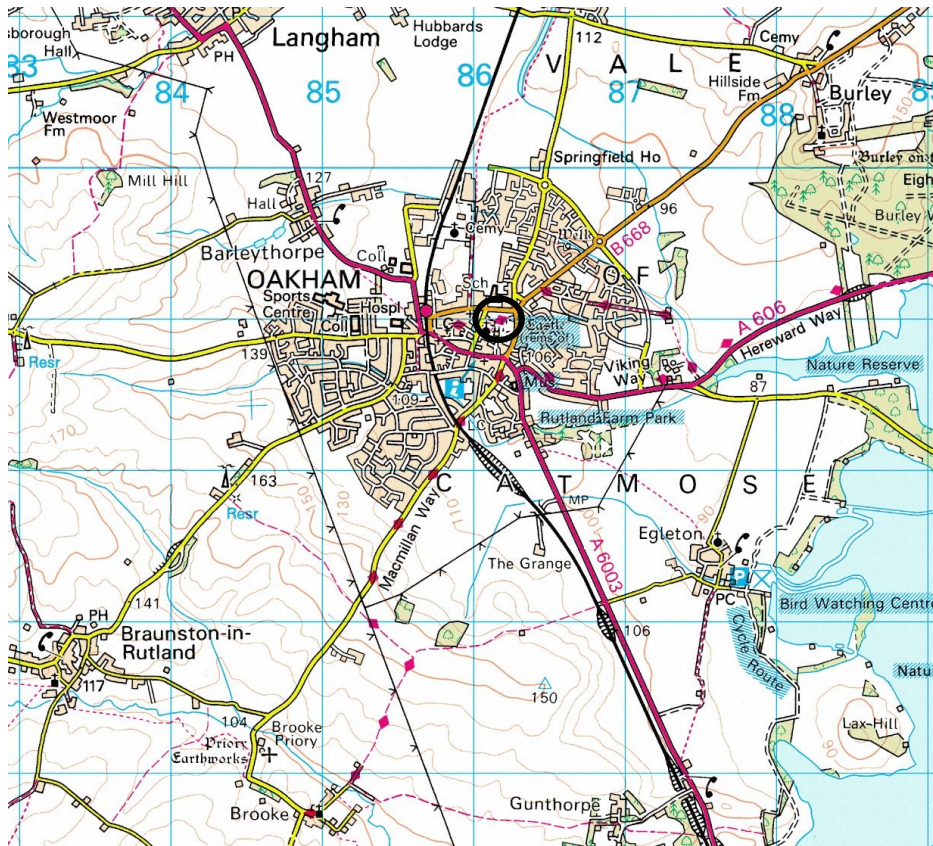


Figure 1: Location plan. Site ringed. Scale 1:50000

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2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

Oakham Castle is located in the centre of modern Oakham (Fig 1) and the site for the planting is on the north side of the precinct within the outer bailey, now known as Cutts Close and used as a park and recreation area (Fig. 2).

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the bedrock geology consists of Interbedded Siltstone and Mudstone of the Dyrham Formation, with the exception of the western tip of the area which is Marlstone Rock Formation Limestone. No superficial geology was recorded.

(<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (Accessed on 16th December 2013).

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The earthworks of the early medieval motte and bailey castle, at Oakham Castle, are listed in the Scheduled Monument records (SM 17018) and have been assigned an early medieval date (HER Ref: MLE5569; DLE5346). This earliest phase of the castle was a motte and bailey and was built around 1075. The motte was substantial, 37'6" wide and 18'3" deep, and

surrounded an earth rampart that formed the early defences of the castle (MLE5574). The motte is still visible in the corner of the ramparts, but the outside edges have been cut away. There is also an early medieval aisled hall house (MLE5570). Oakham Castle Hall has been used as a court house since the early 13th century and solely as such from at least the 16th century (MLE9900). A stone curtain wall replaced the earthen rampart sometime in the 13th or 14th century, located to the north-east (MLE9901).

The site affected by the tree planting is within the outer bailey of the castle, an area known as Cutts Close, which is currently used as a park and recreation ground.

Previous work carried out recently at the Castle includes a watching brief on a new exterior lighting trench within the inner bailey (Coward 2010) and a laser scanning and photographic survey of the whole site (Sheppard and Walker 2011).

As it was deemed likely that the proposed development could have a damaging effect on any archaeological deposits, should they exist, archaeological work was required by English Heritage following an approved written scheme of investigation (WSI; Score 2013).

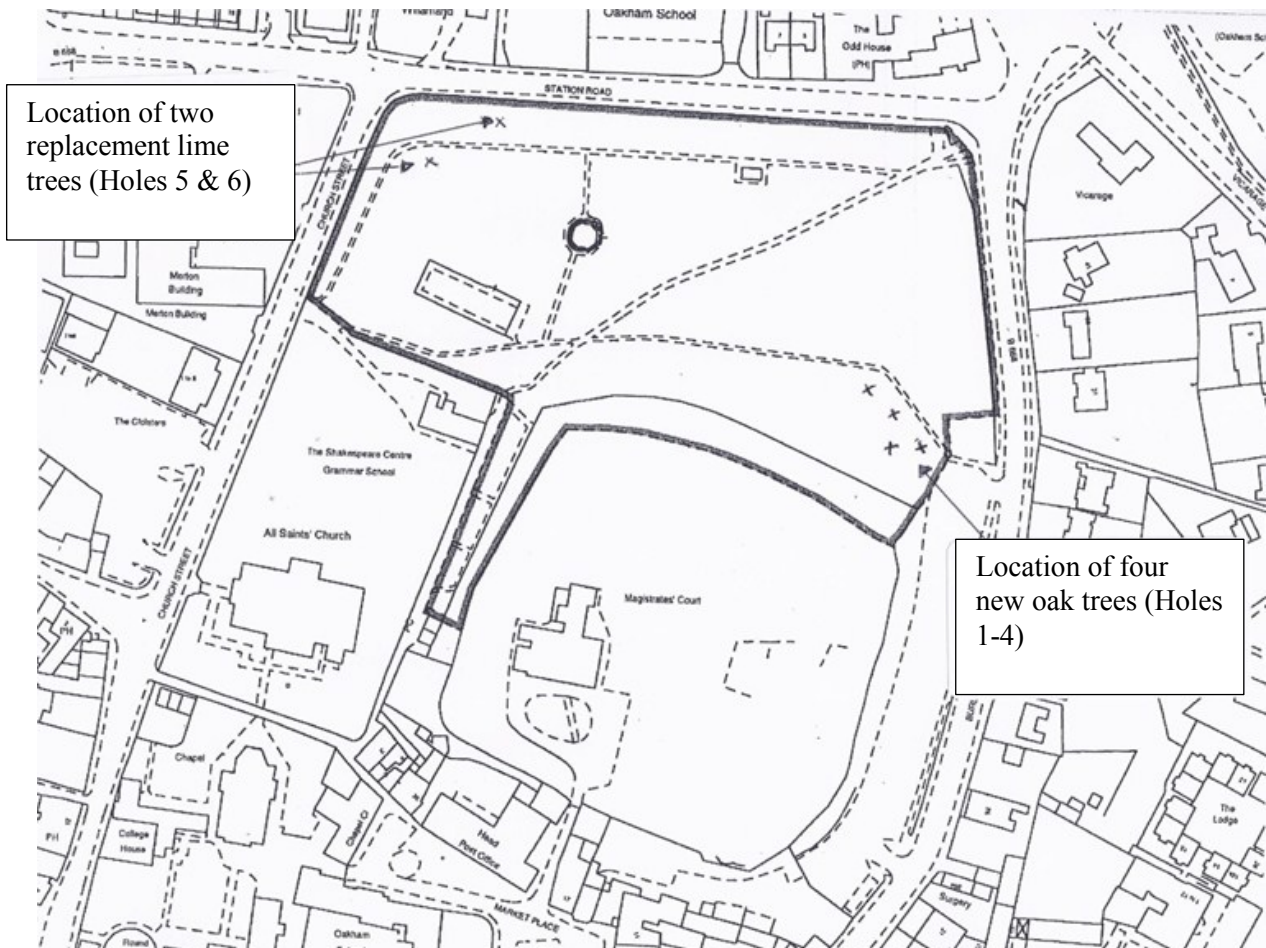


Figure 2: Approximate location of the new trees within the Scheduled area (plan supplied by client)

4. Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological work was:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits/ structural evidence to be affected by the proposed works.
- To record any archaeological deposits/ structural evidence to be affected by the works.
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets
- To produce an archive and report of any results.
-

Research Aims

In addition to these general objectives the following research objectives also apply:

The site lies within the Scheduled Monument of Oakham Castle and could identify deposits relating to its origins and development as well as possible earlier activity. Archaeological work could contribute to knowledge on settlement, trade, landscape and society. Artefacts can provide evidence for on-site activities, craft, industry and exchange across broad landscape areas and palaeoenvironmental evidence could provide information on land use.

5. Methodology

The work followed the WSI (Score 2013) and adhered to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev. 2012) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (rev. 2008).

The programme of work which required a watching brief comprised the hand-excavation of holes for four new trees and two replacement trees in Cutts Close (Locations shown on Fig.2). The holes were visually inspected, hand-cleaned where appropriate and recorded following standard ULAS methods. The spoil was checked for artefacts.

6. Results

The site was visited on the 6th December 2013. The tree holes were excavated in two locations; close to the south-east and the north-west corners of Cutts Close (Fig. 2). Four of the holes, for new oak trees, were excavated on the south-east side of the park, close to the car park on Burley Road. Holes 1-4 were approximately 0.6m in diameter and excavated to a depth of 0.3m, through topsoil consisting of dark brown sandy clay loam containing irregular ironstone fragments and rounded pebbles. At a depth of c.0.2m, mixed subsoil was encountered consisting of mid-orange brown clay with frequent ironstone fragments and occasional fragments of modern brick (Figs 3-4).

Two replacement lime trees (Holes 5 and 6) were planted in the north-west corner of the park. The fifth hole was located on the north side of the bank facing Station Road. The hole measured approximately 1.0 x 0.6m and c.0.35m deep and was cut into yellow sandy clay

with frequent ironstone fragments. Local knowledge suggests that this bank was constructed from the spoil generated by the excavations of the Oakham Canal, which was formerly located just to the north of the site (R. White pers. comm). The final hole was excavated in the north-west corner of the park, in the low-lying area within the banks. The hole measured 1.0 x 0.6m x 0.4m. Topsoil was 0.2m thick and the subsoil below consisted of dark reddish brown silty clay of a very smooth and fine consistency with very few inclusions (Fig. 5). No archaeological deposits or significant finds were observed during the work.



Figure 3: Hole 1, excavated for a new oak tree, in the south-east corner of the site



Figure 4: The oak trees after planting



Figure 5: Hole 6, excavated for a replacement lime tree, at the north-west corner of the site

7. Conclusion

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Oakham Castle during the excavation of holes for six new and replacement trees. Despite the location of the work, within the scheduled area of Oakham Castle, no archaeological deposits were disturbed. The tree planting holes were excavated predominantly through topsoil to a depth of c.0.30m below ground level, therefore impacting minimally upon the monument.

8. Archive

The site archive will be held by Rutland County Council, under the Accession No: OAKRM:2013.37

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 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	Oakham Castle Tree Holes
Project Type	Archaeological Watching Brief
Project Manager	V. Score
Project Supervisor	J. Browning
Previous/Future work	Previous
Current Land Use	Park
Development Type	Tree planting
Reason for Investigation	Scheduled Monument Consent
Position in the Planning Process	completed
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK8617 0903
Start/end dates of field work	06-12-2013
Archive Recipient	Rutland County Council
Study Area	18209 square metres

10. Bibliography

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

Coward, J., 2010 *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Oakham Castle, Rutland*. ULAS Report 2010-094.

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

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

Sheppard, R. and Walker, D. 2011 *A Terrestrial Laser Scan and Photographic Survey of Oakham Castle, Rutland* Unpublished report by Trent and Peak Archaeology

11. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by Jennifer Browning for ULAS. Vicki Score managed the project. I would like to thank Richard White of Oakham Town Council and the contractors George Walker (tree care) Ltd. for their help and co-operation during the work.

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