

**An Archaeological Watching Brief During
Excavations To Install A New Electric Cable
At Cutts Close, Oakham Castle,
Oakham, Rutland,
(NGR SK 8617 0903)**

**Scheduled Monument No:17018
English Heritage SMC Ref: S00079884**

Jennifer Browning



**An Archaeological Watching Brief During
Excavation of a New Electric Cable Trench at Cutts Close, Oakham
Castle, Oakham, Rutland
(NGR SK 86200 08950)**

**Scheduled Monument No: SM 17018, HA
English Heritage SMC ref: S00079884 NGR: SK 8617 0903**

Jennifer Browning

**For:
Rutland County Council**

Approved by:

Signed:



Date: 24th June 2014

Name: Vicki Score

ULAS Report Number 2014-113

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of a trench for a new electric cable from the bandstand to a store 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: S00079884). No deposits of clear archaeological origin were disturbed by the groundworks, however a low earthwork seen on the park was identified as a linear spread of ironstone rubble. 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 a trench for a new electric cable connecting the existing supply at the bandstand with a store at Cutts Close, Oakham, Rutland (Fig. 1). The work took place within the scheduled area of Oakham Castle (Scheduled Monument No: SM 17018, List Entry No: 1010702) and was carried out in June 2014 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services.

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 (S00079884). A strategy for a programme of archaeological work was set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (Kipling 2014), hereinafter WSI, approved by English Heritage.



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 the town of Oakham, Rutland. The cable trench was located on the north side of the precinct within the outer bailey, which is now known as Cutts Close and is used as a park and recreation area.

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the bedrock geology consists of Interbedded Siltstone and Mudstone of the Dyrham Formation. No superficial geology was recorded. (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (accessed on 18th June 2014).

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 new cable trench 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). A recent watching brief was undertaken in December 2013 during tree planting on the north-west side and the south-east corner of the park but revealed no archaeological deposits (Browning 2013).

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; Kipling 2014).

4. Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the current archaeological work was:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits or earlier building remains.
- 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.

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 palaeo-environmental evidence could provide information on land use.

5. Methodology

The work followed the WSI (Score 2014) 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 which required a watching brief comprised the excavation of a cable trench using a mini-digger (Terex TC16) with a 0.25m ditching bucket. The trench was observed during excavation, the sides and base were visually inspected, hand-cleaned where appropriate and recorded following standard ULAS methods. The spoil was checked over and metal-detected in order to locate any potential artefacts.

6. Results

The site was visited on the 2nd June 2014. The trench was positioned towards the northern edge of the park, and just south of the bank which forms the northern boundary (Fig. 2). The trench connected a store with the existing electric supply at the bandstand. It was excavated from the store adjacent to the existing path before turning south to pass around a flowerbed and onwards to the bandstand. The trench was 0.25m wide and excavated to a depth of c.0.50m. The topsoil consisted of dark reddish brown silty clay containing irregular ironstone fragments, rounded pebbles and occasional modern rubbish (bottle tops, plastic and glass fragments). At a depth of c.0.25-0.30, mixed subsoil was encountered consisting of dark reddish brown silty sandy clay with moderate ironstone fragments. The undisturbed natural substratum consisted of ironstone fragments in a matrix of reddish brown sandy clay and was encountered at c 0.40m below ground level.

A low broad bank c. 5-6m wide was seen as an indistinct earthwork extending from the path towards the centre of the park. It was orientated approximately north-south and was transected by the cable trench. The topsoil was thinner in this area (0.10m thick) and overlay small and medium loosely compacted fragments of ironstone rubble within a topsoil-like matrix, which appeared to be forming the body of the shallow earthwork or spread. No finds were recovered from the rubble. Undisturbed substratum was observed below this level. Local knowledge indicates that the bank to the north of the trench was constructed from spoil generated by the excavations of the Oakham Canal, which was formerly located just to the north of the site (R. White pers. comm). It is possible that the feature in the trench is associated with this activity or possibly with later disturbance in the park.

The spoil heaps were detected by a local metal-detectorist, Stuart Carter. This produced a variety of modern artefacts including fragments of tin foil, ring-pulls and metal wire but no earlier finds.

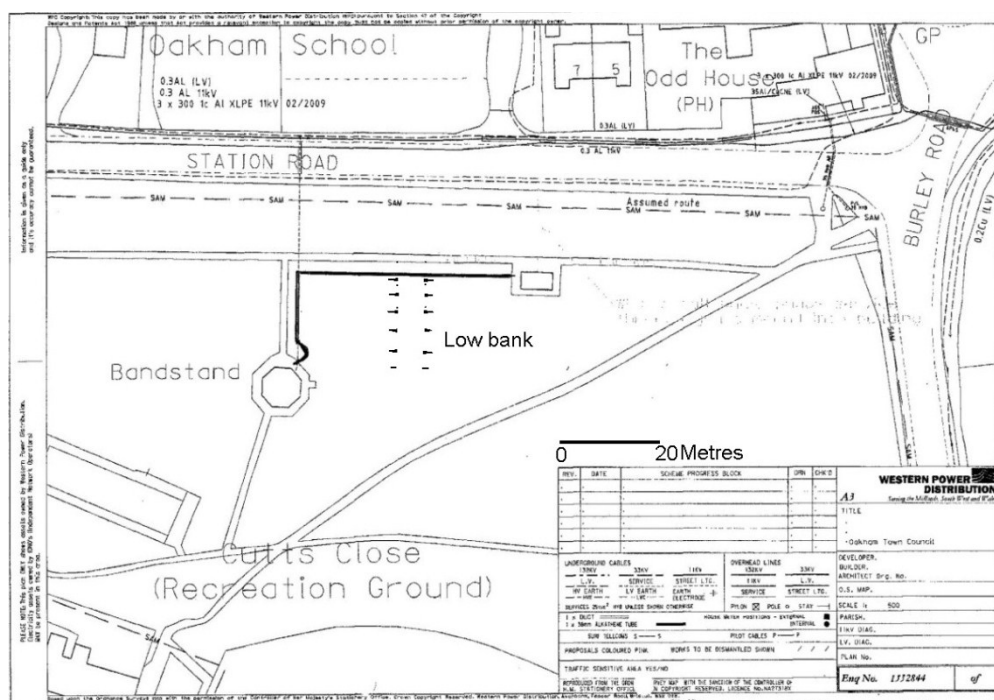


Figure 2: Approximate location of the cable trench within the Scheduled area, showing approximate location of linear rubble spread (plan supplied by client)



Figure 3: Rubble noted below the topsoil where a low earthwork was sectioned



Figure 4: Section in the north–south aligned section of trench adjacent to the flowerbed

7. Conclusion

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Oakham Castle during the excavation of a trench for a new electric cable running from the bandstand to a store. The trench was c.0.50m deep and undisturbed natural substratum was encountered at approximately 0.40m below ground level. A slightly raised area in the centre of the trench was identified as a spread of loosely compacted stone rubble, broadly linear in shape and orientated north-south. There were no finds to indicate date however the shallow depth directly beneath a thin covering of topsoil, coupled with the lack of compaction may suggest that it is fairly recent. Therefore, despite the location of the work within the scheduled area of Oakham Castle, no deposits of clear archaeological origin were disturbed and no archaeological finds were recovered.

8. Archive

The site archive will be held by Rutland County Council, under the Accession No: OAKRM: 2013.37, together with the archive for a watching brief undertaken during tree planting in December 2013 (ULAS Report 2013-210).

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 Electricity Cable
Project Type	Archaeological Watching Brief
Project Manager	V. Score
Project Supervisor	J. Browning
Previous/Future work	Previous
Current Land Use	Park
Development Type	Services/utilities
Reason for Investigation	Scheduled Monument Consent
Position in the Planning Process	completed
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK 8617 0903
Start/end dates of field work	02-06-2014
Archive Recipient	Rutland County Museum
Study Area	18209 square metres

10. Bibliography

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

Browning, J. 2013 *An Archaeological Watching Brief During Tree Planting at Cutts Close, Oakham Castle, Oakham, Rutland, (NGR SK 8617 0903)* ULAS Report 2013-210

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

Kipling, R. 2014 *Written scheme of investigation for archaeological work at Oakham Castle, Leicester (NGR: SK 578 088)*

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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 Richard White of Oakham Town Council and the contractors Jim and Steve for their help and co-operation during the work. The spoil heaps were kindly detected by Stuart Carter, a local metal-detectorist.

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ULAS Report No: 2014-113
19.06.2014

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