



University of
Leicester

Archaeological Services



**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Gresley Farmhouse,
Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire**

NGR: SK 32813 01582

Rebecca L. Hearne

ULAS Report No 2014-115

An Archaeological Watching Brief

At Gresley Farmhouse, Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire

NGR: SK 32813 01582


Rebecca L. Hearne

For: Mr A. Judge

Planning Ref: 14/00289/LBC

Planning Application Authority: Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

Approved by:

Signed: 

Date: 11.12.2014

Name: Patrick Clay

University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH

Tel: (0116) 252 2848 Fax: (0116) 252 2614

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An Archaeological Watching Brief with control and supervision at Gresley Farmhouse, Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire

Rebecca L. Hearne

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Gresley Farmhouse, Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 1st December 2014. Work was undertaken on behalf of Willow Projects Ltd during ground works in advance of the erection of an extension of the existing property. Machine excavated foundation trenches and other groundworks were monitored but no archaeological features, deposits or finds were observed and the result of the investigation proved negative. The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, subject to their confirmation, under the accession number X.A152.2014.

1. Introduction

During December 2014 University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Gresley Farmhouse, Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire. The work was undertaken on behalf of the property owner Mr A. Judge and the developer Willow Projects during ground works in advance of the construction of an extension to the existing property. Planning permission was granted by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (Planning REF: 14/00289/LBC) for the demolition of a pre-existing lean-to and subsequent construction of a new two-storey extension comprising a bedroom and dining room, subject to an archaeological condition. The Grade II listed status of the existing building, which dates to the early 16th century, the changes in the building plan over time, and the presence of medieval archaeology in its vicinity (Clarke 2013), indicate high potential for below-ground archaeological remains within the extension footprint.

Archaeological attendance was required by planning authority following advice from the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council in her capacity as advisor to the planning authority in order to identify and record any structural or archaeological remains of significance which might exist. This report presents the final results of the archaeological investigation.

2. Site Location, Geology and Topography

Gresley Farmhouse is situated immediately to the east of the Twycross Road and Mill Lane T-junction, directly opposite Sheepy Magna C of E Primary School in the settlement core of the village (Figure 1). The property fronts onto Twycross Road to the north-west and is flanked by other properties to the north- and south-west. The site occupies a square area at the southern corner of the existing property measuring approximately 5.5 x 5.4 m.

British Geological Survey data indicates that the bedrock geology comprises red-brown Gunthorpe Mudstone, dolomitic siltstone and fine green-grey sandstone. This underlies superficial river terrace drift and floodplain deposits comprising red sand and gravel with lenses of silt, clay and peat (BGS).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

Gresley Farmhouse is a Grade II listed house, originating as a high-status, timber-framed domestic building possibly owned by the Vincent Family in the early 16th century. It was passed through marriage to the Gresley family in 1757. Several phases of remodelling through its history have resulted in its 18th century external appearance, while its internal fine moulded ceiling timbers indicate a late medieval/early post-medieval construction date (Clarke 2013).

The farmhouse lies within the early medieval and post-medieval settlement core of Sheepy Magna with a medieval enclosure and hollow-way nearby to the south (HER ref: **MLE3206** and **MLE3185**; Hartley 2008). Consequently, there was the likelihood that buried archaeological remains would be affected by the development (Figures 2-3).

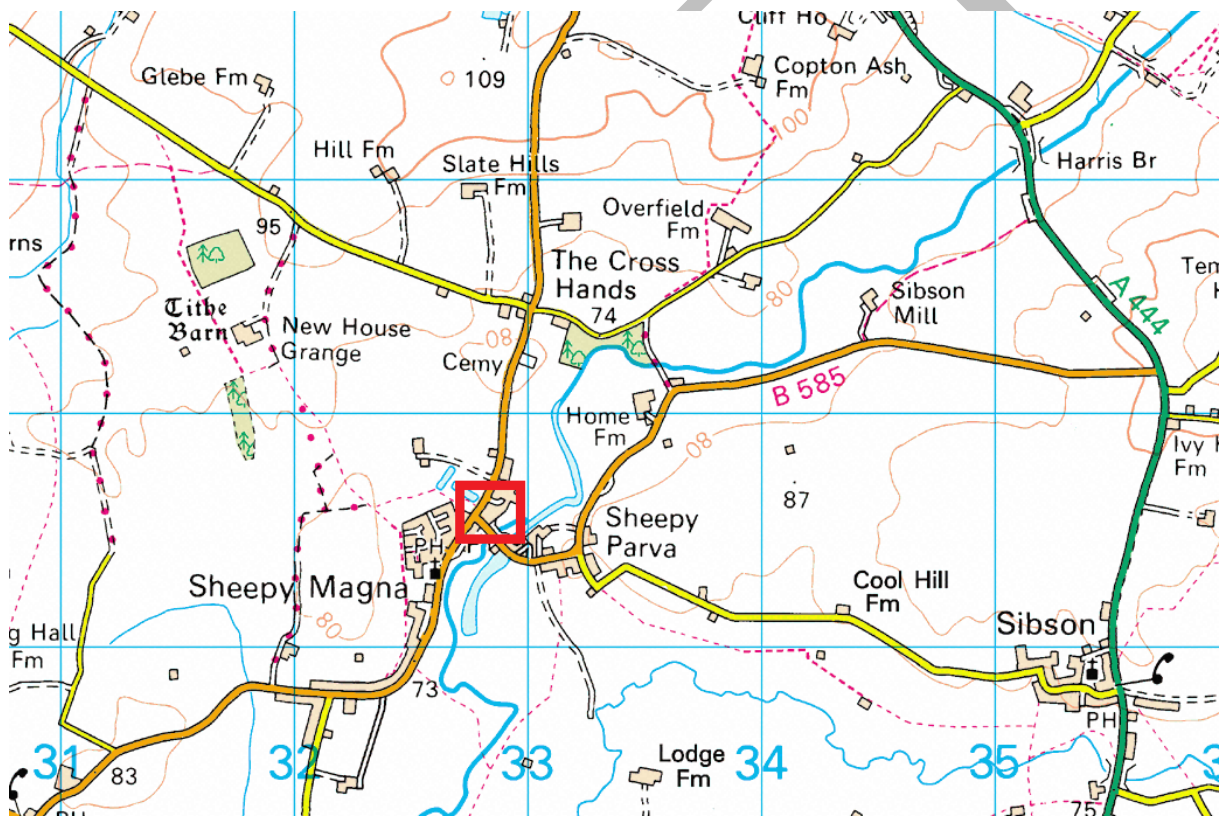


Figure 1. Location of Sheepy Magna (Gresley Farmhouse in red square).

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Figure 1. Plan of development area (supplied by client).

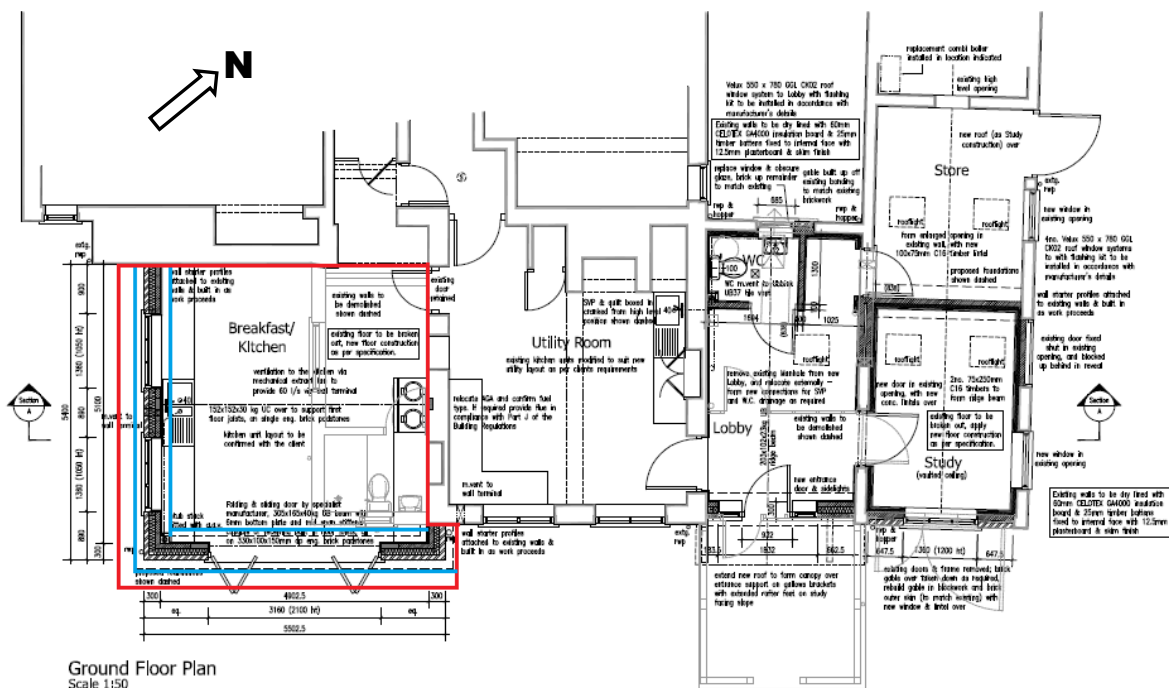


Figure 3. Proposal for ground floor development (David Granger Architectural Design Ltd.; supplied by client). Watched area highlighted in red. Foundation trenches highlighted in blue.

4. Archaeological Objectives

The project was to carry out an archaeological watching brief (with control and supervision) at the above site in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; Section 12 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment). This was carried out, as a requirement

by the Planning Authority, on any ground works in connection with the erection of the new buildings and associated works. This work followed a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; see appendix, Clay 2014), recommended by the Principal Planning Archaeologist as specialist adviser to north-west Leicestershire District Council.

The purpose of the archaeological work may be summarised as follows:

- 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

Archaeological attendance for inspection and recording was carried out with a site visit on 1st December 2014. The project involved the inspection and control of the machine-dug ground level reduction and foundation footprint strip by an experienced professional archaeologist to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.

The excavation was carried out using a Case 360° mini-digger with flat c. 0.96 m and 0.4 m-wide buckets and a Terex DT6806 dumper. Levels were taken by the developer with a Laser Alignment LB1 laser level and laser receiver staff. All exposed areas, sections and spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. Any archaeological deposits were hand cleaned, planned, photographed, and sample excavated and recorded as appropriate to addressing the objectives of the watching brief. Field notes were recorded on pro-forma ULAS watching brief record forms.

The work followed the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Clay 2014) and the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev. 2012) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (rev. 2008) and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LMARS).



Figure 4. Machine removing overburden to a depth of c. 0.4 m revealing made ground to the south of the existing building.



Figure 5. Completed foundation trenches, looking north.

6. Results

The former ground level was reduced within the footprint of the extension by c. 0.4 m (Figure 4). Much of the area was made ground comprising dark grey soil overburden with lenses of orange sand containing some charcoal and very frequent modern rubble. This included brick, hardcore, local sandstone boulders, roof tile, copper, ceramic and plastic pipes, modern glass, tree roots and Victorian willow-pattern pot sherds in the overburden over the entirety of the site. At a depth of 0.4 m (i.e. at reduced ground level) against the north-east outer wall was a layer comprising modern brick mixed with sherds of glass and rubble occupying the footprint of the demolished lean-to, thus presumably representing a lean-to/pantry or yard surface which was replaced by the modern lean-to.

Two foundation trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.9 – 1.05 m from the reduced ground level to a width of 0.7 – 0.76 m (Figure 5). To the south-west of the site, black topsoil was visible to a depth of 0.3 m from the original ground level therefore was not seen within the trench cut. In the south-east trench, topsoil was occasionally deep enough to be seen in the trench section at a depth of < 0.05 m from reduced ground level. This was underlain throughout by a subsoil of mid grey-brown to grey-green clayey to sandy silt with occasional large rounded pebbles and cobbles and occasional lenses of iron-stained medium-grained sand. This was visible to an average depth of 0.53 – 0.54 m (from reduced ground level) over the site. The natural substratum comprised orange-red poorly sorted sand, gravel, and pebbles with lenses of yellow and bright red iron-stained silt, sand, and gravel of the Quaternary river terrace deposits (BGS).

No deposits of archaeological interest were observed in any of the areas subject to machine stripping and ground works.

7. Discussion

Despite the location of the site within the medieval settlement core and the age and characteristics of the existing property, no archaeological deposits were identified during the assessment. Building rubble, domestic waste, a modern brick layer and areas of made ground were identified, presumably deriving from the modern extension and remodelling of the property.

8. Archive

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council with accession number **X.A152.2014**. The archive contains:

- 1 watching brief recording sheet
- 1 photographic record sheet
- Thumbnail prints of digital photographs
- CD containing digital photographs
- An unbound copy of this report, Report No. 2014-215

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

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) at the University of York (

Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of OASIS information

Project OASIS no.	universi1-14650
Project Name	Gresley Farmhouse, Twycross Road, Sheepy Magna

Project Type	Archaeological attendance (watching brief)
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Rebecca Lucy Hearne
Previous/Future work	Historic Building Appraisal and Impact Assessment/None
Current Land Use	Residential garden
Development Type	Detached dwelling extension
Reason for Investigation	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-planning condition
Site Co-ordinates	SK 32813 01582
Start/end dates of field work	01-12-2014
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	c. 30 m ²

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal, the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, in due course.

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Acknowledgements

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Rebecca L. Hearne

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS)
School of Archaeology and Ancient History
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel: 0116 252 2848

Fax: 0116 252 2614

Email: rlh29@leicester.ac.uk

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DRAFT



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay
University of Leicester Archaeological
Services (ULAS)
University of Leicester,
University Road,
Leicester LE1 7RH

T: +44 (0)116 252 2848

F: +44 (0)116 252 2614

E: ulas@le.ac.uk

W: www.le.ac.uk/ulas



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