



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Strip Map & Sample
on land at Leicester College, Painter
Street, Belgrave Gate, Leicester**

NGR: SK 5909 0556

Nathan Flavell



ULAS Report No. 2014-210


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**An archaeological strip map & sample on land at
Leicester College Painter Street, Belgrave Gate, Leicester**

NGR: SK 5909 0556

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For: Leicester College

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Nathan Flavell

Summary

An archaeological strip map and sample excavation was carried out on land at Leicester Cottage, Painter Street, Belgrave Gate, Leicester (SK 5909 0556) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 26th November 2014. The work was carried out on behalf of Leicester College in advance of the construction of a new college building. A single trench totalling 85.32 square metres was excavated. This revealed post-medieval truncation to the south-east and an undisturbed organic deposit to the north-west. The site archive will be held by Leicester City Museum Services under the accession number A33.2014.

Introduction

This document constitutes the final report for an archaeological strip map and sample carried out on land at Leicester College Painter Street, Belgrave Gate, Leicester (SK 5909 0556). The work was carried out on behalf of Leicester College by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 26th November 2014.

The work was requested by the Leicester Planning Archaeologist in their capacity as archaeological advisor, in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. The work followed the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) as laid out in the Design Specification for Archaeological Work, Leicester College, Painter Street, Belgrave Gate (Clay 2014).

Geology and Topography

The application area covers around 3000 square metres of flat land at a height of 53m aOD and is largely covered in hard standing. The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology of the site is likely to be made ground, overlying alluvium and Branscombe Mudstone Formation.

Historical and Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment has been undertaken for the area (Hunt 2014). The Historic Environment Record of the area indicates that the site lies close to the line of the Roman Road known as the Fosse Way and near findspots of prehistoric and Roman artefacts. A leper hospital occupied part of the site during the medieval period and later, after the nearby River Soar was canalised, the area contained wharves, limekilns and a refuse destructor. A power station lay to the west of the assessment area and new roads, houses and businesses occupied most of the assessment area from the 19th century to the late 20th century, when the power station was converted for use as a college, which later expanded to occupy the entire site, including the assessment area itself. Therefore, the whole former college site, including the assessment area itself, has been built on several times.



Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:2500)

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Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work were:

- 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 excavate and 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

The foundation trench was excavated using a tracked 360 degree excavator with a 1.8m wide, ditching bucket. The trench was 47.4m long, 1.8m wide to a depth of approximately 1.4m below ground level. It was located along a stretch of tarmacked road surface deemed to be an area of least disturbance on the site.

The trench, other exposed areas, sections and existing spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. Archaeological features, if present, were to be hand cleaned, planned, photographed and sample excavated as appropriate to addressing the objectives of the evaluation. Field notes were recorded on pro-forma ULAS trench recording forms whilst all stratigraphic units would be given a unique context number and recorded on pro-forma ULAS context sheets if deemed appropriate. Archaeological features if present would be drawn to a

scale of 1:20, trench plans to a scale of 1:50 and sections to a scale of 1:10. The trench was located in relation to prominent features within the property and tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

All work followed the *Institute for Archaeologists' (IFA) Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological field evaluations*.

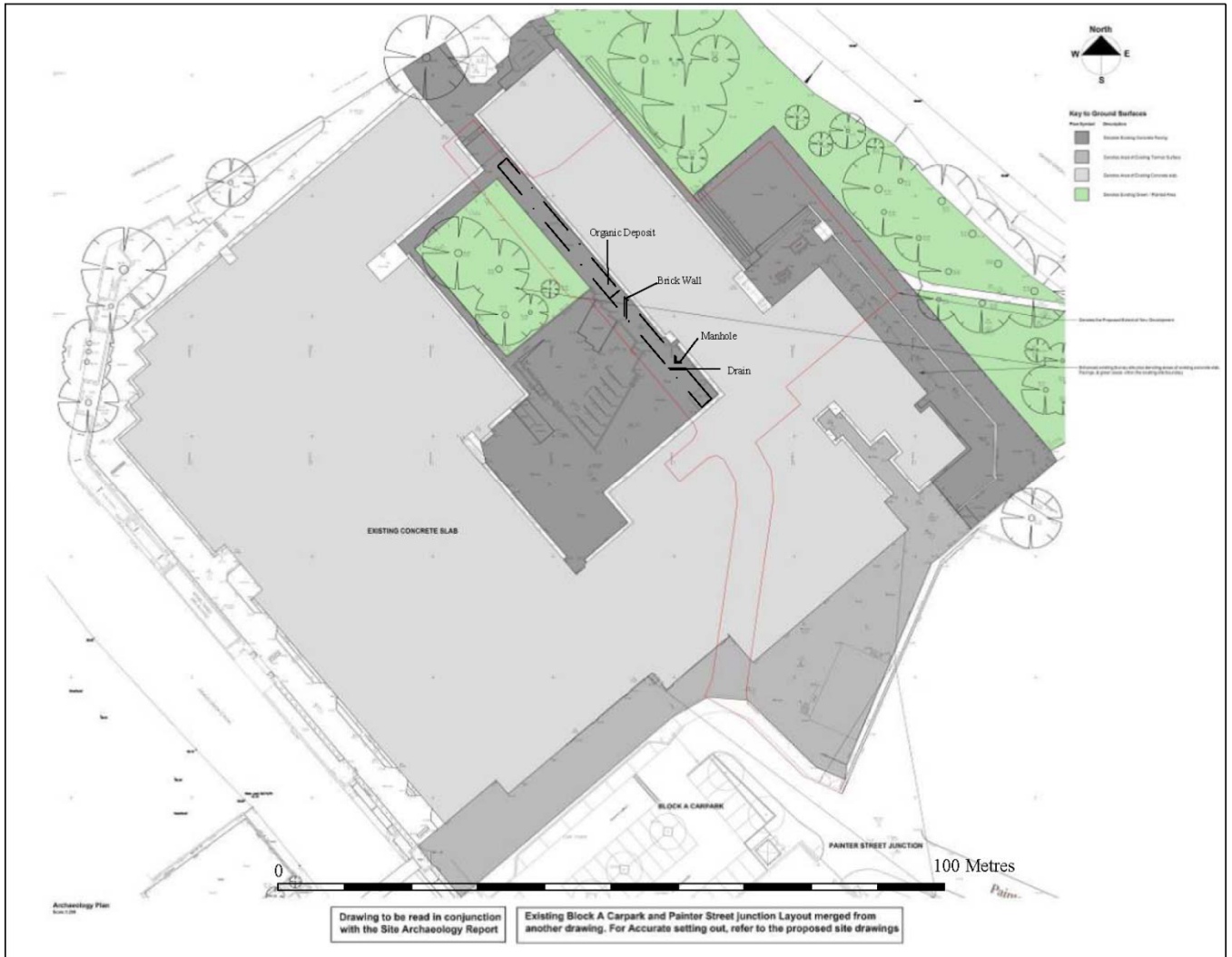


Figure 2: Site plan showing trench location.
Plan adapted from architects plan provided by client.

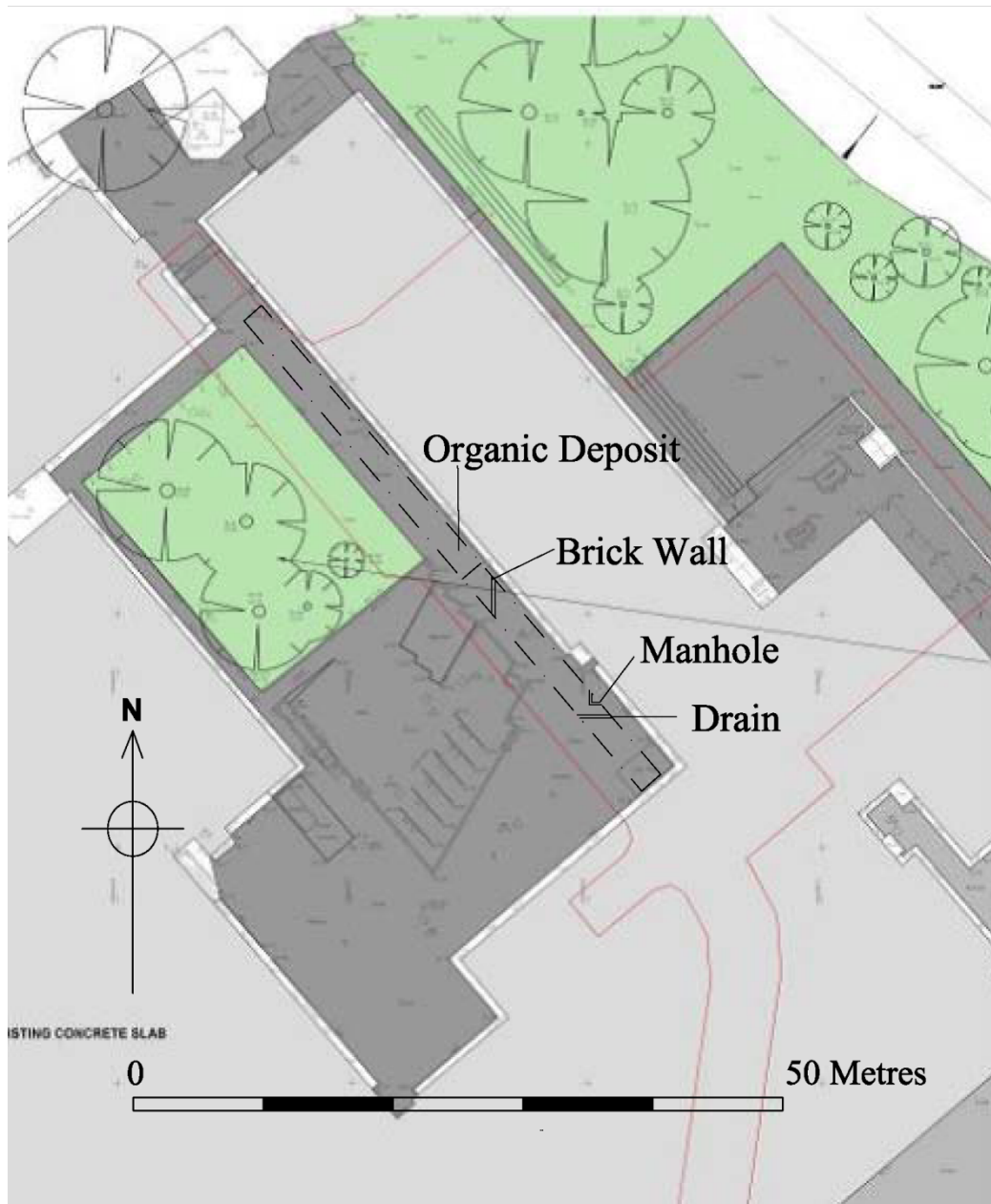


Figure 3: Site plan close-up view

Results

An initial trench was excavated to assess whether there were deposits present that would warrant further machine stripping. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.4m down to a layer of dark-grey organic clay at the north-west end of the trench. At 26m to the south-east, this layer narrowed to reveal a deposit of mixed orange-brown mottled silty-clay at the same depth. This was truncated by a series of post-medieval drains and pipes, the deposit they were dug into changing to grey-brown sandy clay. A single brick foundation wall aligned north-south was encountered at a depth of 0.9m, 0.2m wide, single skinned. A truncated square brick manhole access structure was uncovered at the same depth further to the south-east. A surface made from blue engineering brick was noted above this, 0.8m below ground level while machining.



Figure 4: Brick surface looking north-east

These post-medieval (most likely Victorian) brick structures were overlain by grey-brown sandy clay with many brick and charcoal inclusions, 0.23m thick. This was overlain by a modern pink stony hard-core layer that seems to change where the north-south brick wall lies in the trench.

In the north-western part of the trench, the organic layer was overlain by brown-orange sandy-clay with orange stone inclusions, 0.2m thick. This was overlain by red-brown clay sand 0.2m thick. These two layers narrow out towards the south-east to be overlain by a layer of thick pink clay. This was overlain by mixed dark grey clay 0.2m thick, in turn overlain by mixed grey-pink sandy-clay filled with demolition material and coal fragments, 0.26m thick. The three layers overlying this made up modern hardcore (0.4m thick) for the tarmac layer on top of it, 0.1m thick.



Figure 5: Trench looking north-west



Figure 6: Trench looking south-east

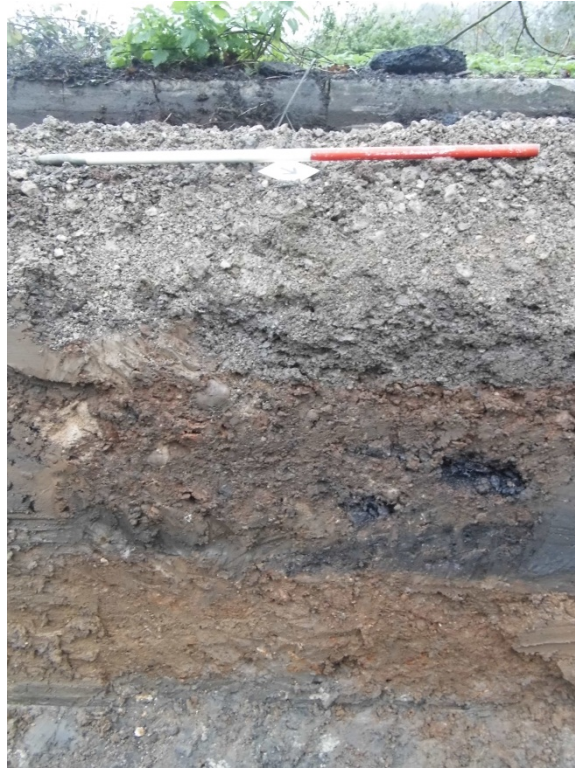


Figure 7: Trench section looking north-east



Figure 8: Brick manhole access looking north-east

Discussion

In view of the modern disturbance encountered and absence of pre-modern deposits no further machine stripping was undertaken. Generally the site has been heavily truncated from the 18th to the 20th century, with canalisation immediately to the northwest and northeast, tramway buildings and the eventual building of a power station (later converted to the technical college). These have now mostly been demolished.

The lack of any archaeology before the post-medieval period seems to tie in with the site being part of meadow land before it was purchased by the Leicester Navigation Company in 1793 and Leicester Corporation in 1878, for the canal and tramway building. Certainly the organic layer may suggest the lack of building on the site and possibly even part of a flood plain. The north-south wall within the trench may well have been the eastern boundary between Leadenhall Street and Spittlehouse Street (since demolished for the ring road) and the site.

Bibliography

Clay, P., 2014, Design Specification for Archaeological Work, Leicester College, Painter Street, Belgrave Gate

Hunt, L., 2014, *An archaeological desk-based assessment for land adjacent to Leicester College, Painter Street, Belgrave Gate, Leicester (SK 5909 0556)*. ULAS Report 2014-158

Archive

The site archive consists of: Two A4 watching brief recording forms, 1 A4 photo index, and digital photographs.

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the accession number A33.2014.

Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| OASIS no. | universi1-244211 |
| Project Name | Leicester College, Painter Street, Belgrave Gate, Leicester |
| Project Type | Strip map and sample |
| Project Manager | Patrick Clay |
| Project Supervisor | Nathan Flavell |
| Previous/Future work | Desk-based assessment |
| Current Land Use | Brownfield |
| Development Type | New college building |
| Reason for Investigation | NPPF |
| Position in the Planning Process | Condition |
| Site Co ordinates | SK 5909 0556 |
| Start/end dates of field work | 26/11/2014 |
| Archive recipient | Leicester City Council |

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|------------|-----------------------|
| Study Area | c. 3000 square metres |
|------------|-----------------------|

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to the client and contractors for their co-operation and assistance on site. Fieldwork was undertaken by Nathan Flavell; the report was written by Nathan Flavell and the project was managed for ULAS by Patrick Clay.

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