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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Strip,
Map and Sample Excavation
on Land at St Luke's Church
of England Primary School,
Main Street, Thurnby,
Leicestershire
NGR: SK 64769 03936**

Jennifer Browning



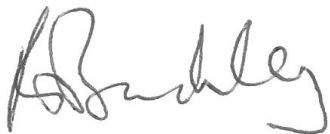
ULAS Report No 2017-127
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For: Leicestershire County Council

Filename/Version	Checked by	Date
2017-127	 R.J. Buckley	1/9/2017

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ULAS Report Number 2017-127
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Accession Number X.A52 2017

CONTENTS

Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Site Description, Topography and Geology.....	2
Archaeological and Historical Background.....	2
Aims.....	4
Methods.....	5
Results.....	5
Conclusion.....	12
Archive and Publications.....	12
Publication.....	13
Acknowledgements.....	13
Bibliography.....	13
OASIS Data Entry.....	14

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location.....	3
Figure 2: Location of the proposed development from tender drawing LCC.....	4
Figure 3: The proposed new classroom, from tender drawing LCC.....	4
Figure 4: Location of trenches and human remains.....	7
Figure 5: Trench 1. Looking west.....	8
Figure 6: Trench 2 looking east.....	9
Figure 7: View southwest across the site to towards the end of the strip. Trench 3 in foreground. The human bones were recovered from the area in the foreground where spoil is mounded.....	9
Figure 8: Looking northwest during the stripping. Dark re-deposited earth can be seen.....	10
Figure 9: Some of the human bones <i>in situ</i>	10
Figure 10: The south face of Trench 3, showing the cut through the natural subsoil (orange) and the backfill.....	11
Figure 11: Exploratory trench through the redeposited soil.....	11

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Summary

An archaeological strip map and sample excavation was undertaken in May 2017 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Leicestershire County Council. The work took place on land at St. Luke's Primary School, Thurnby, Leicestershire LE7 9PN (NGR SK 64769 03936), prior to the construction of a new classroom (Planning Application 2016/REG3MI/0283/LCC). Investigations suggested that the ground had been previously built-up; natural subsoil was only encountered on one part of the site. Modern pottery and glass were recovered from the backfilled soil. Human bones, deriving from a minimum of two individuals were recovered close to the north-eastern end of the excavation area. These are believed to have been disturbed from a nearby archaeological context and re-deposited within the site, as part of the made-ground. A bundle of services, which probably supplied a former mobile classroom, since demolished was also revealed. No other archaeological deposits were observed or artefacts recovered during the work.

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A52.2017.

Introduction

An application for planning permission has been submitted by the client for the erection of a classroom block with associated cloak and toilet facilities at St. Luke's Church of England Primary School in Thurnby LE7 9PN (Planning Application 2016/REG3MI/0283/LCC). An archaeological strip, map and sample was undertaken at the site in May 2017 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Leicestershire County Council, in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Section 12 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment). The fieldwork specified below was intended to provide a record of the archaeological remains in mitigation of the impact of the proposed development.

The proposed archaeological investigation consists of a strip, map and record exercise centred in the footprint of the proposed building in order to determine the nature, extent, depth, date and significance of any archaeological deposits which may be present. This information will help the planning authority assess whether the groundworks will have an adverse impact on buried archaeological remains, thereby enabling an informed planning decision to be taken.

The archaeological investigation was undertaken in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*. All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation and Archaeological Excavations* (2014).

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The proposed development site is located in the centre of Thurnby, which is approximately four miles east of Leicester adjoining its city boundary. Thurnby village is located to the south of the A47 after it leaves the city of Leicester (Figure 1) in Harborough district. St. Luke's Primary School is within the historic core of the village and the Thurnby Conservation Area. The main school buildings are surrounded by residential properties to the west, south and east and there are playing fields to the north. The Grade II listed Manor House and Grade II* listed St. Luke's Church also lie to the west of the school (Figure 2).

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain shows that the underlying geology is likely to consist of superficial deposits of Mid Pleistocene sand and gravel over Charnwood Mudstone Formation (BGS OpenGeoscience). The site is on relatively flat ground at c.115m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

Archaeological and Historical Background

Thurnby is not mentioned in the Domesday Book and it is likely that the land belonged to the nearby manor of Stoughton (VCH 1945, 4). By c.1143 a church was in existence in Thurnby with the advowson held by Leicester Abbey until the Dissolution of the monasteries. The Crown then held the advowson until it was granted to the Beaumont family before 1681 (VCH 1945, 7). It remained with the descendants of the Beaumont family through the manor of Stoughton (VCH 1945, 13, 7) until the 20th century, when it passed through several hands before coming into the possession of the Martyr's Memorial and Church of England Trust in 1957.

In 1833 a day school, supported by 'a lady', was open free of charge to the children of cottagers in Thurnby and Bushby; small fees, however, were paid for children under the age of five. The school was attended by 15 boys and 24 girls. Two new primary schools were opened in the 1950s in the area transferred to Leicester in 1935, where considerable building work has subsequently taken place.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland indicates that there are no known archaeological sites within the assessment area itself, however it does indicate that there are a number of sites in the vicinity of the study area, ranging in date from the prehistoric to the post-medieval periods.

Large quantity of flint artefacts (**MLE16940**), dating from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods have been found on a site north-west of Bushby Spinney, approximately 1km south-southeast from the assessment area.

Sixteen Roman burials were discovered at a site at St. Luke's Close in Thurnby in 1957 with associated finds including brooches, rings and pottery (**MLE2538**). Roman pottery has been recorded in various spots in the area in the vicinity of the school.

The site lies within Thurnby medieval settlement core (**MLE9022**). Medieval pottery has been recovered from various locations in the surrounding area.

Aside from a group of earthworks identified at Hereford Drive in Bushby (**MLE9137**), post-medieval features in the vicinity of the proposed development site are historical buildings within the settlement core of Thurnby, located mainly on the Main Street. This includes St. Luke's Primary school main building (**MLE13580**), Grade II listed dating from 1865.

Archaeological surveys, geophysical (Smalley 2010) and fieldwalking (Coward 2010; Clark and LaCombe 2017), have been undertaken in nearby fields along with an evaluation (Coward 2010). Within the village centre, Warwickshire Museum Field Services undertook an archaeological observation at St. Luke's Church during the construction of an extension against the north wall of the church where 19th century foundations were recorded (Warwickshire Museum Field Services 2006).



Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Location of the proposed development from tender drawing LCC

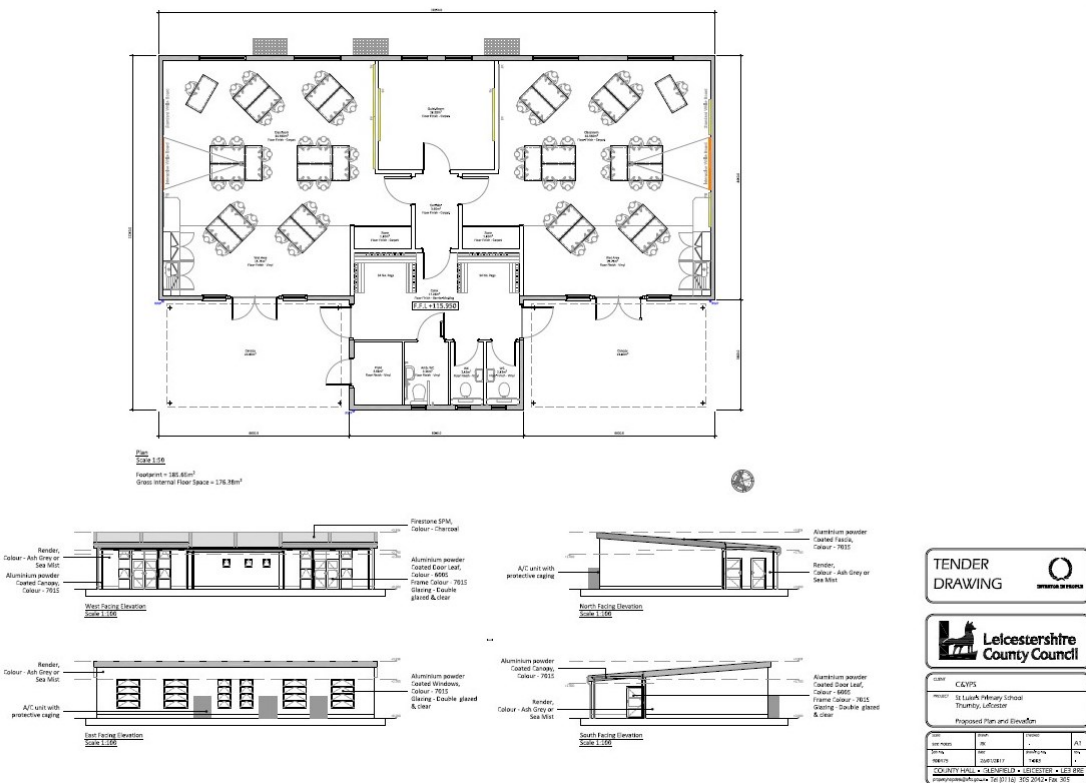


Figure 3: The proposed new classroom, from tender drawing LCC

Aims

Excavation is an intrusive form of investigation that will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

The Written Scheme of Investigation for the project identified a number of research aims which the fieldwork had the potential to contribute to:

The Iron Age and Roman Periods (Taylor 2006; Willis 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2012)

The proposed archaeological work may contribute to knowledge on Iron Age – Roman transitions in rural settlement, landscape and society. Artefacts may identify trade links and economy.

The Medieval period (Lewis 2006, Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2012)

The excavation may contribute towards research into the origins and development of medieval settlement, landscape and society. Environmental evidence could provide information on local environmental conditions as well as settlement activity, craft, industry and land use. Artefacts can assist in the development of a type series within the region and provide evidence for evidence for craft, industry and exchange across broad landscape areas.

The main objectives of the archaeological fieldwork will be:

- 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 produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the investigation is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Methods

The project involved the control and supervision of overburden removal by an experienced professional archaeologist over the area of the footprint of the classroom block to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains. Soil was removed down to the top of archaeological deposits, natural undisturbed ground or the formation level whichever is reached first.

Topsoil and overburden were removed carefully in level spits by a tracked mechanical excavator using a 1.5m toothless ditching bucket. Initially trenches were excavated to assess the area and the excavations were later expanded. The excavation area was examined by hand cleaning.

Results

The area to be reduced, comprising the footprint of the proposed classroom (Figure 3) was approximately 20m x 15m. The southern part was under tarmac (playground), while the northern section was turfed (playing field). Investigation of the site initially proceeded by excavating three trenches, measuring 15m long by 1.5m wide and

orientated east-west (Figure 4). Trench 1 was excavated on the south-eastern side of the school playground, with the eastern end partly within the bund. The trench depth varied between 0.50m and 0.72m, just below the proposed formation depth. Topsoil was seen at the eastern end of the trench and was 0.15- 0.25m deep. It consisted of dark brown silty clay loam with frequent pebbles. Below this layer was a thick overburden consisting of mid-reddish brown silty clay with frequent pebbles, stones and occasional building debris. The area appeared heavily disturbed, containing modern brick rubble, root disturbance and veins of blue clay and dark silts. Approximately 4m from the east end of the trench a bundle of pipes and cables, including gas, electric and water, were located running north-south (Figure 5). These were thought to have formerly supplied a temporary classroom on the site and ran across the entire excavation area.

The soil at the base of the trench consisted of a mixed light orange-brown sandy clay with blue clay, with frequent stones, natural flint fragments and occasional modern debris. The ground at the western end of the trench was particularly badly disturbed, with frequent bricks and modern debris. The other two trenches were parallel to the first and of similar dimensions (Figure 6). A satisfactory natural subsoil was not encountered in any of them. The soil at the base of the trenches appeared heavily disturbed and was shot through with areas of silt containing modern debris.

Human bones were encountered close to the eastern end of Trench 3 and initially appeared to be cut by the cable trench (Figure 4). However, closer examination of the burial area did not reveal a grave cut and suggested that the remains had been moved (Figure 9). A large cut and a series of tip lines was seen in the south-facing trench section, which indicated that the entire unit of soil was re-deposited (Figure 10). This seemed to adequately explain why clean undisturbed natural subsoil had not been encountered in any of the trenches. A trial hole was excavated in the centre of the site, using a narrow bucket, to test the depth of the redeposited soil (Figure 11). Excavation proceeded until clear natural subsoils were entered at the base of the trench, at *c.*2.8m below the stripped level and well below the formation level for the site.

The human remains were reported to Leicestershire Police and the scene was attended by a Scenes of Crime Officer (SOCO). This visit confirmed that the bones were archaeological in origin, not articulated and represented more than one individual. It was therefore concluded that the bones had been disturbed from an archaeological context and imported as part of a unit of soil during building up the ground level during the creation of the playing fields. Although there is unfortunately no way of knowing the original burial location, the presence of more than one individual and incomplete nature of the skeletons, does suggest that they were disturbed from a cemetery. Part of a Roman cemetery was uncovered south of the site, during the construction of the houses at St. Luke's Close in the 1950s.

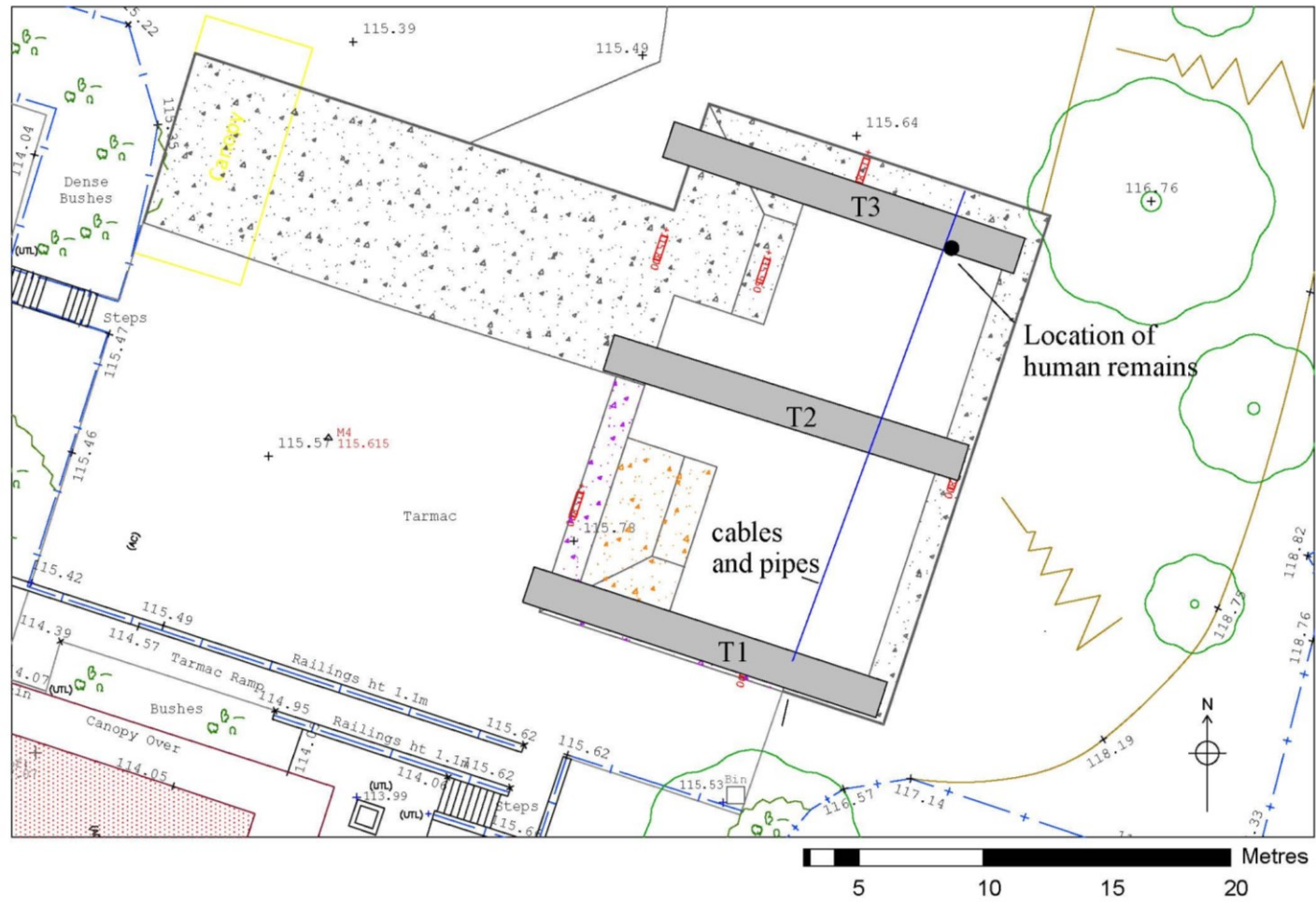


Figure 4: Location of trenches and human remains



Figure 5: Trench 1. Looking west



Figure 6: Trench 2 looking east.



Figure 7: View southwest across the site to towards the end of the strip. Trench 3 in foreground. The human bones were recovered from the area in the foreground where spoil is mounded.



Figure 8: Looking northwest during the stripping. Dark re-deposited earth can be seen



Figure 9: Some of the human bones *in situ*



Figure 10: The south face of Trench 3, showing the cut through the natural subsoil (orange) and the backfill



Figure 11: Exploratory trench through the redeposited soil

Conclusion

An archaeological strip, map and sample excavation was undertaken in May 2017 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Leicestershire County Council. The work suggested that the development area had previously been landscaped and largely consisted of made-ground. Only one area of natural subsoil was observed; in the north-eastern corner of the reduced dig. A number of human bones were discovered in this part of the site, within the redeposited soil. No grave cut was observed, indicating that they had been imported to the site along with the soil. Although they were not articulated, they clearly came from the same individuals (there were pairs of arm and leg bones, for example). A minimum of two individuals were present. The bones were assessed by a forensic expert from Leicestershire police (Simon Chapman) and it was concluded that they were archaeological in origin. Unfortunately although it can be assumed that they were disturbed from a burial ground within the vicinity of the site, it cannot be proven, as the burial context has been lost. It is recorded that sixteen Roman burials were discovered at St. Luke's Close in Thurnby in 1957, along with associated finds including brooches, rings and pottery (**MLE2538**). Roman pottery has also been recorded in various spots in the area in the vicinity of the school. However, in the absence of a secure archaeological context, study of the human bones is not recommended and they should be re-buried in due course.

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A52 2017), consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council. The human remains are not of archaeological interest and will be re-interred in an appropriate place in due course.

The archive consists of:

- watching brief record sheets
- photographic record indices
- digital photographs

Publication

A version of the summary (see above) will appear in due course in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Acknowledgements

Jennifer Browning of ULAS undertook the archaeological work on behalf of Leicestershire County Council. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

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03/08/2017

OASIS Data Entry

PROJECT DETAILS	Project Name	St Luke's Primary School, Thurnby		
	Start/end dates of field work	15-05-2016 - 17-05-2016		
	Previous/Future Work	No		
	Project Type	Strip, map and sample excavation		
	Site Status			
	Current Land Use	recreational		
	Monument Type/Period			
	Significant Finds/Period	none		
	Development Type			
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition 2016/REG3MI/0283/LCC		
	Planning Ref.	unknown		
	PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	St Luke's Church of England Primary School, Main Street, Thurnby, Leics LE7 9PN	
Study Area				
Site Coordinates		SK 64769 03936		
Height OD		115m OD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (NCC)		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Richard Buckley		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Jennifer Browning		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Leicestershire County Council		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	ULAS	ULAS	ULAS
	ID (Acc. No.)	X.A52 2017	X.A52 2017	X.A52 2017
	Contents	none	Photos	Field notes
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	<i>An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation on land at St. Luke's Primary School, Thurnby, Leicestershire</i>		
	Author	Browning, J.C.		
	Other bibliographic details	-		
	Date	2017		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		
	Description	Developer Report A4 pdf		



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