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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Attendance,
Supervision and Recording of
Groundworks at
Cutts Close, Oakham, Rutland**

NGR: SK 86235 09040

Andrew Hyam



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**An Archaeological Attendance, Supervision and
Recording of Groundworks at
Cutts Close,
Oakham,
Rutland**

NGR: SK 86235 09040

A R Hyam

For: Oakham Town Council

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**University of Leicester
Archaeological Services
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614**

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Summary

An intermittent archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks at Cutts Close, Oakham, Rutland between 27th of June and 26th of July 2018 by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). The site forms part of the Scheduled Monument Area of Oakham Castle and lies within the historic core of the town. Work took place to erect a new vehicle barrier gate in the north-eastern corner of Cutts Close and to renew an existing tarmac pathway running from east to west along the southern edge of Cutts Close between Church Street and Burley Road.

A deposit of mid yellow-brown silty clay of unknown depth was observed in both the gate and pathway areas of the watching brief. A single shed of 17th/18th century pottery was recovered but no archaeological features were exposed during the work.

The report will be archived under accession number OAKRM.2018.18

Introduction

In accordance with NPPF (section 12 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment) this document forms the report for an archaeological attendance, supervision and recording of groundworks at Cutts Close, Oakham, Rutland. Under Scheduled Monument Consent S00186796 approval has been granted for the removal of existing vehicle barrier gate posts and replacement with a metal medium duty triangular Vehicle Barrier Gate (hereafter VBG), and works associated with the widening and resurfacing of the park footpath within the Cutts Close area.

When considering the works within the scheduled ancient monument the Inspector of Ancient Monuments at Historic England as advisor to the local authority, recommended the requirement for a programme of archaeological attendance, supervision and recording work take place due to the site's location within an area of archaeological interest and the potential for exposing archaeological features and deposits. The work has been commissioned by Oakham Town Council and followed that specified in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Attendance, Supervision and Recording of Groundworks at Cutts Close, Oakham, Rutland* (hereinafter the WSI).

Background

Oakham is the county town of Rutland which is situated on the south-eastern edge of Leicestershire (Figure 1). Oakham Castle is located in the heart of Oakham town centre and has its origins dating to the 11th century but with the strong likelihood of Saxon associations. The castle consists of a number of distinct areas focussing around the 12th-century aisled hall which is now regarded as one of the best surviving

examples of Norman domestic architecture to be found in the country today. The areas can be divided into: the Grade I listed hall building, which is now the only remaining structure within the castle; the inner bailey with its small motte and 13th-century walls and other earthworks; the outer bailey, known as Cutts Close, which includes an area of former fishponds.

Only a limited amount of archaeological work has taken place within the area of Cutts Close and this has been restricted to watching briefs and some test-pitting. The resulting information from this work has revealed possible spoil deposits associated with the nearby, and now infilled, Oakham Canal. No clear archaeological features or deposits have yet been identified.

The northern side of the precinct within the outer bailey, is known as Cutts Close and is used as a park and recreation area. The new VBG gate is located in the north-eastern corner of Cutts Close in a gap between the bank which runs southwards along Burley Road and westwards along Station Road (Figure 2 and Figure 3). A gate used to be in this location but had been removed following damage a number of years ago leaving a single metal post in place at the end of a concrete post and rail fence running towards Station Road. The new barrier consists of a main post onto which the gate is hung, a second post will replace the existing metal post whilst a third will act as an opening/fastening post for when the barrier is open. All of the new posts are made from 140mm (approx.) diameter steel tube which are cemented into the ground.

The renewal of the pathways (shown in Figure 2) requires the removal of the existing tarmac which is worn and is likely to be of insufficient width for wheelchair access (Figure 4 and Figure 5). The old tarmac and bedding was removed to a depth of approximately 230mm below present ground level. New concrete edgings and a new tarmac surface will complete the work.

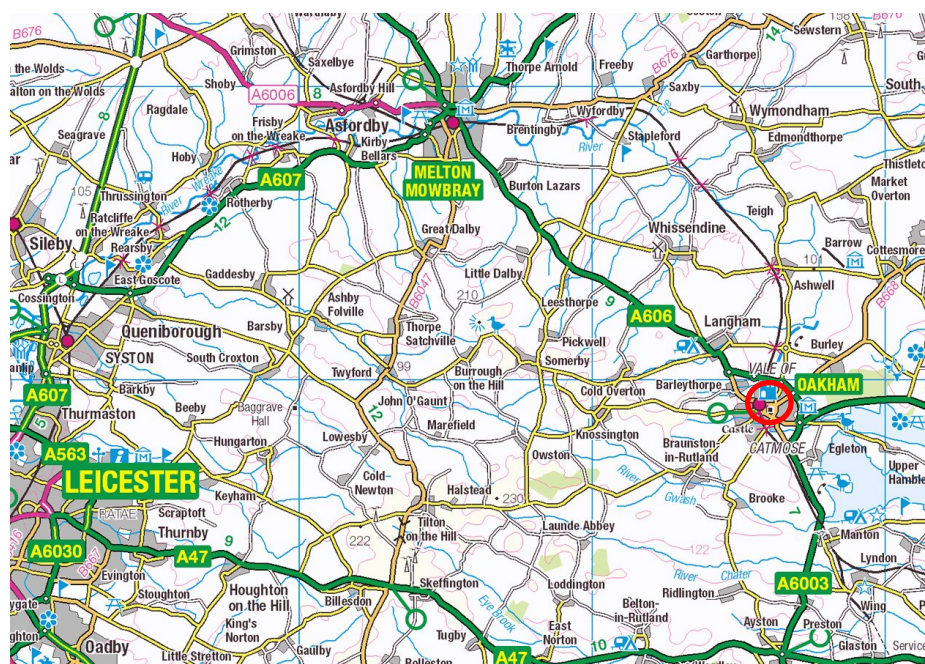


Figure 1 Oakham location

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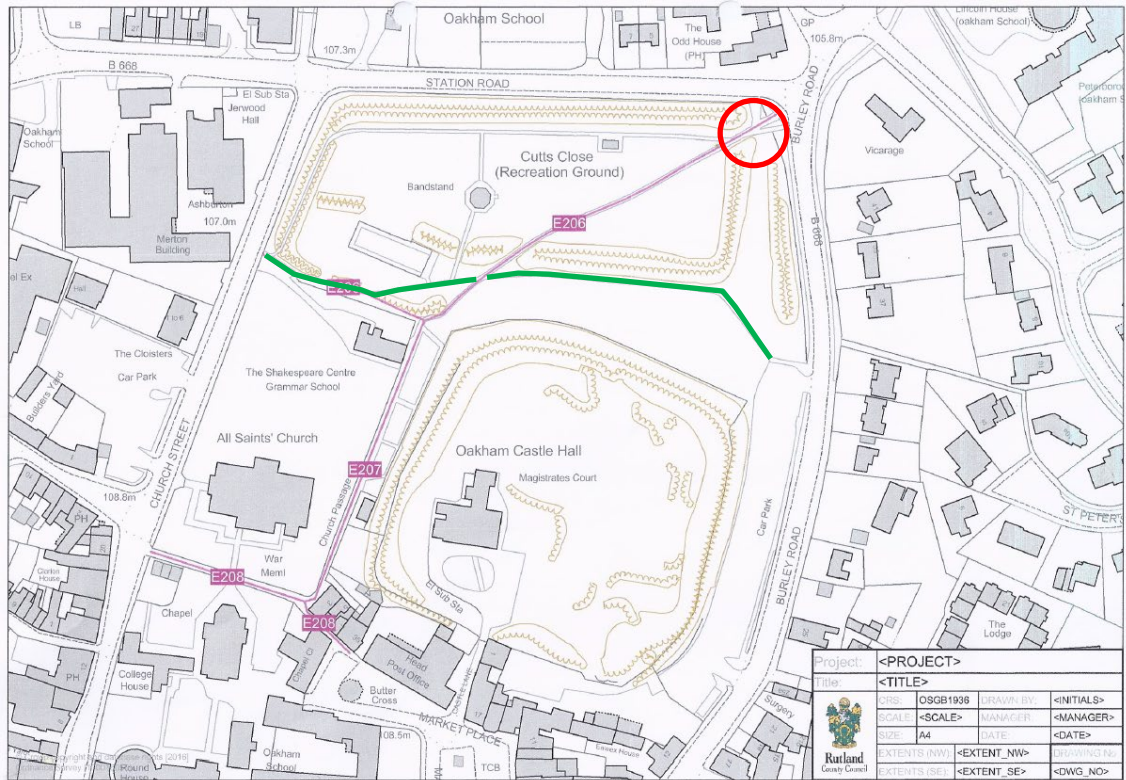


Figure 2 Location of groundworks within Cutts Close
 Red circle shows location of VBG posts. Green line shows location of path renewal
 Map supplied by client

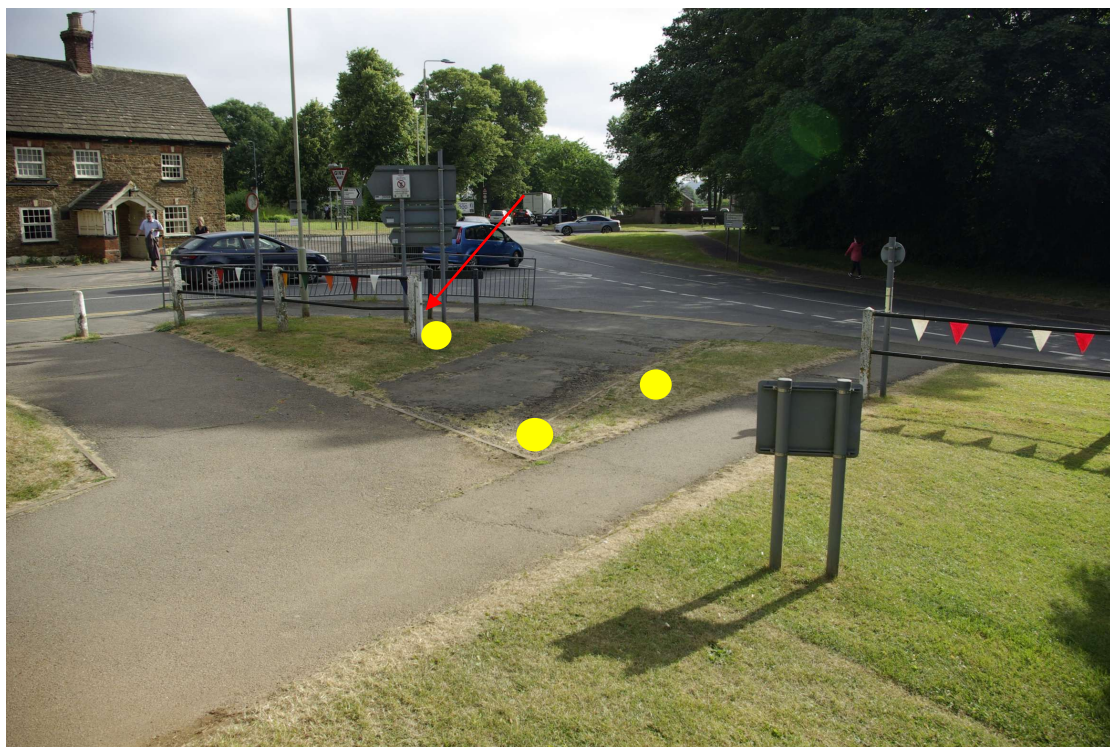


Figure 3 Location of VBG
 Looking north-east. Burley Road on right, Station Road on left
 Red arrow shows post to be removed, yellow dots indicate location of new posts



Figure 4 Pathway to be renewed
Looking south-west. Castle mound on left and centre



Figure 5 Pathway to be renewed
Looking north-east from Church Street. Red line indicates the path to be renewed

Objectives

The overall objectives and research agenda are detailed in the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (ULAS 2018).

The specific objectives for this programme of 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 record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape.
- To recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results
- To produce an archive and report of the results.

Methodology

The methodology for the VBG and path renewal was different due to the different nature of the works. The post holes for the VBG were excavated by hand and the spoil inspected as it was removed. However, the presence of concrete in all three holes meant that a pneumatic drill had to be used in the upper parts of the holes before hand-digging to the final depth could take place.

The path repairs involved the removal of the degraded tarmac and concrete edging strips using a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a narrow bucket. Any bedding material beneath the old tarmac was then reduced to create a 1.2m wide base for the new path. The deepest parts of the newly excavated path were along the outer edges where new concrete edgings bedded in fresh concrete were to be laid. In most places the maximum depth below current ground level was around 0.2m but in some places was as deep as 0.3m. The path centres were barely reduced in depth at all below the removed tarmac. Removed overburden was inspected for finds and the exposed levels were assessed and recorded. The pathway works took place in four stages with stripping, levelling, and new tarmac being laid before proceeding to the next stage. Only the stripping works were observed by the archaeologist.

Results

Gateway Installation

Post One

Post One was the north-easternmost of the three posts in the position of an existing gate post (Figure 6). The existing metal post, which was bedded in concrete, had to be removed using a small pneumatic drill. Following removal of the post the resulting hole was hand cleaned and widened to create a square-section hole 0.35m by 0.40m wide and 1m deep. The north, east and western sides of the hole were obscured by the

former concrete bedding and the remaining concrete post. The southern side of the hole contained an upper disturbed 0.2m thick layer of sandy silt which was probably backfill from the earlier post construction. Beneath the disturbed layer, and continuing down to the base of the hole, was a mid-red brown sandy silty clay which contained small fragments of ironstone or ferruginous limestone. No finds were recovered from the fill.



Figure 6 Gate Post 1
Looking north. 0.5m scale and 1m scale within the post hole

Post Two

Post Two was placed to the south of Post One across the pathway. The upper 0.15m of the post hole was blocked by concrete from the path edging and had to be broken through with a pneumatic drill. Once through the concrete layer the 0.4m by 0.4m and 0.8m deep hole was then dug by hand. A homogenous mid yellowish brown silty clay was encountered all the way down to the base of the hole (Figure 7). The fill also contained a number of small fragments of ironstone or ferruginous limestone. A single abraded sherd of post medieval cooking vessel was recovered from the fill (see appendix 2). No other features or deposits were present.



Figure 7 View into Gate Post hole 2
1m scale

Post Three

Post three was placed to the west of the other two posts to act as a hold-back post when the gate is open. Its location was just in the grass at the junction of two paths. A thin deposit of silty clay covered a layer of concrete extending from the path edges across much of the post position (Figure 8). The silty clay and concrete had an approximate depth of 0.25m and had to be removed using a pneumatic drill. Beneath this the same mid yellowish brown silty clay as seen in Post Two was observed. No features, deposits or finds were present in this 0.35m by 0.35m by 0.7m deep hole.



Figure 8 View into Gate Post hole 3
1m scale

Pathway Renewal

As already noted, the tarmac pathway was renewed in four stages running from Church Street, to the west, to the public car park in the east (Figure 9). The stages were each between approximately 40 and 55m in length.

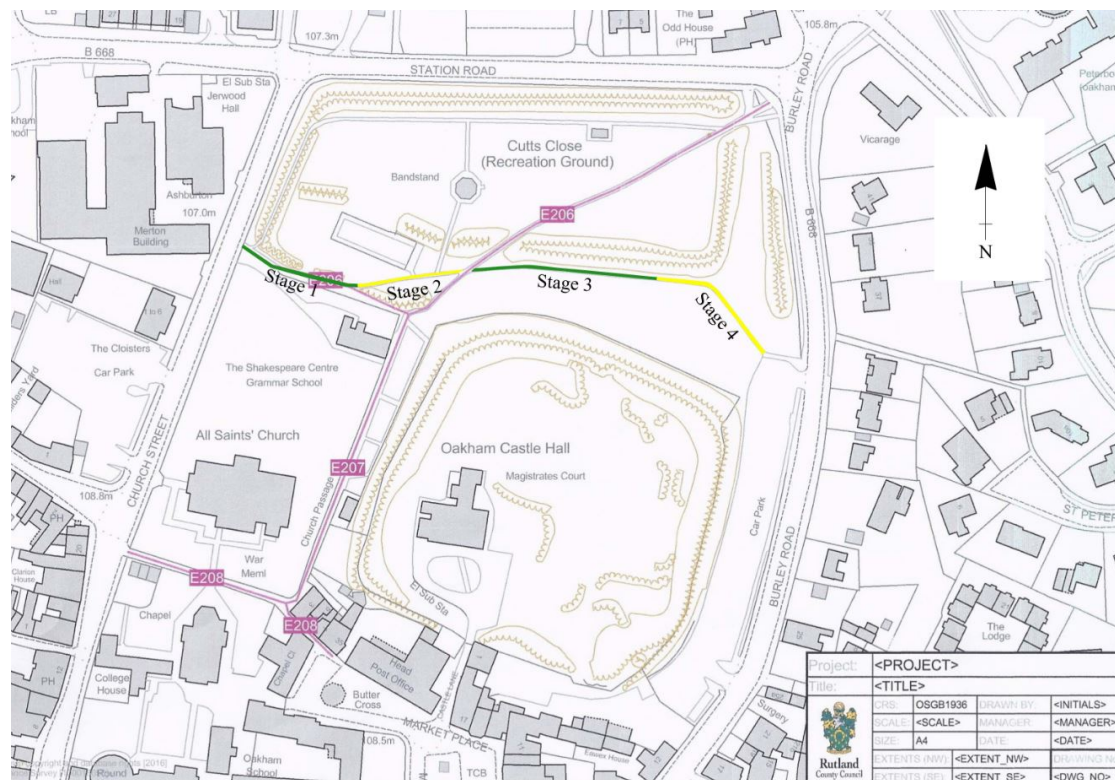


Figure 9 Stages of path renewal

Path Stage 1

Starting at Church Street the line of the path ran along the southern edge of the bailey embankment before turning northwards to run over the top of the bank (Figure 10). Removal of the old tarmac exposed a gravel and mill waste base which was partially removed down to a disturbed overburden of mid brown sandy silt with modern rubbish in it which included some decimal coins. A fragment of a clear glass bottle (beer or mineral water) with the embossed name Oakham was also recovered from this layer. Due to the curving nature of the new path and the proximity to the bank the excavated width varied between 1.3m and 1.45m in width. The edges of the new path were excavated down to between 0.22m and 0.3m to accommodate the new concrete edging strips. In places the stripping exposed the top of a mid-yellow-brown silty clay deposit which was similar in nature to the deposit seen during the excavation of the gate posts. The groundworks did not extend into this deposit. No features were seen within this deposit nor was there any indication of any structural remains relating to the bank construction seen.



Figure 10 Pathway Stage 1, final excavated level
Looking west towards Church Street. 1m scale

Path Stage 2

The second stage of the path renewal ran from the eastern end of Stage 1 down a slope in the bank to join a cross-roads in the paths (Figure 11). Beneath the tarmac was a layer of gravel and mill waste over a layer of disturbed mid-brown sandy silt exactly as seen in Stage 1 of this work. The excavated path had an average width of around 1.25m and a maximum depth of between 0.2m and 0.25m. More modern finds including plastic fragments and a ball point pen were recovered from the sandy silt layer but were not retained. The underlying mid-yellow-brown silty clay deposit was

only seen in a few isolated patches and no features were seen within it. No archaeological material or artefacts were seen.



Figure 11 Pathway Stage 2, final excavated level
Looking south-west

Path Stage 3

The third stage of the path renewal programme ran from the path crossroads at the eastern end of Stage 2 westwards for just over 50m. The line of the new path ran along the southern side of the long bank running from east to west across Cutts Close. As with the previous stages of work an approximately 0.2m thick layer of gravel and mill waste below the old tarmac was removed to expose a disturbed layer of mid-brown sandy silt containing modern debris and rubbish. Rather more of the underlying mid-yellow-brown silty clay deposit was seen in this stage but no finds or features were exposed or found.



Figure 12 Pathway Stage 3, final excavated level
Looking west

Path Stage 4

The final stage of the path renewal programme ran eastwards for approximately 50m to join the north-west corner of the public car park running along Burley Road (Figure 13). Stripping off the old tarmac exposed the same gravel and mill waste deposits as seen along the earlier stages of the path. A small area of apparently dumped late 19th or early 20th century bricks was observed at the point where the path turns from its east to west alignment to follow a north-west to south-east line. Many of the bricks were broken and none were deliberately laid to form a surface. The bricks had an average size of around 230mm long by 112mm by 65mm and appeared to be handmade, or at least not factory mass-produced. The brick area was laid within the pathway bedding layer suggesting that the deposit was a levelling dump rather than a deliberately built feature. The maximum depth of Stage 4 was 0.2m below current ground level and the underlying mid-yellow-brown silty clay deposit was only glimpsed in places.



Figure 13 Pathway Stage 4 being completed
Looking south-east towards car park

Discussion

The excavation of the VBG post holes in the north-east corner of Cutts Close cut into, but not through, the mid-yellow-brown silty clay deposit seen across the site. Earlier watching briefs in the Cutts Close area have also identified this deposit but few have exposed very much of it and few have excavated very far into it. The single sherd of post medieval pottery found within this material dates to the late 17th or early 18th century which suggests that it is not particularly early in the history of the castle. This layer however seems likely to hold some archaeological material despite being relatively late in date.

The pathway renewal barely exposed the top of the mid-yellow-brown silty clay deposit and no archaeological features, deposits or finds were observed. The pathway work has therefore had a minimal effect upon the historic fabric of Cutts Close.

Archive

The archive consists of:

This report,

Five ULAS pro-forma watching brief forms,

One photographic record sheet,

Two A4 contact sheets containing the digital photographs,

One CD containing the digital photographs.

Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

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A Hyam
ULAS
26.7.2018
ulas@le.ac.uk

Appendix 1 OASIS Information

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-323788		
	Project Name	Archaeological Attendance, Supervision and Recording of Groundworks at Cutts Close, Oakham, Rutland		
	Start/end dates of field work	27-06-2018 – 26-07-2018		
	Previous/Future Work	No / Not known		
	Project Type	Archaeological Attendance, Supervision and Recording		
	Site Status	Scheduled ancient monument		
	Current Land Use	Public open space		
	Monument Type/Period	Castle/medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	1 pottery sherd/post medieval		
	Development Type	Gate and pathway renewal		
	Reason for Investigation	Scheduled monument consent		
	Position in the Planning Process	N/A		
	SMC	S001186796		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Cutts Close, Oakham LE15 6QT		
	Study Area	250m ² approx (1.2m wide pathways)		
	Site Coordinates	SK 86235 09040		
	Height OD	113m OD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (LCC)		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	J Thomas		
	Project Director/Supervisor	A Hyam		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Developer / Oakham Town Council		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	RutlandCounty Museum	RutlandCounty Museum	Rutland County Museum
	ID (Acc. No.)	OAKRM:2018.18	OAKRM:2018.18	OAKRM:2018.18
	Contents	1 sherd of pot	Photos Survey data	Field Notes
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	Archaeological Attendance, Supervision and Recording of Groundworks at Cutts Close, Oakham, Rutland		
	Author	A Hyam		
	Other bibliographic details	ULAS Report No 2018-128		
	Date	2018		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		
	Description	Developer Report A4 pdf		

Appendix 2 Pottery report

Deborah Sawday

A single a body sherd of wheel thrown Earthenware, EA2, weighing 37 grams, was recovered from the post hole 2 during the excavations. The sherd was covered both internally and externally in an iron rich slip and is not closely datable, but probably lies within a 17th or 18th century date range. One likely source is Chilvers Coton in Warwickshire, (Gooder 1984, Sawday 1989).

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Site/ Parish: Oakham Castle Accession No.: OAKRM 2018.18 Document Ref: oakham6.docx Material: pottery Site Type: castle	Submitter: A. Hyam Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Identification: .07.2018 . Method of Recovery: wb. Job Number: 18-787
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UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
UK

Directors

Dr Richard Buckley OBE BA PhD FSA MCifA

e: rjb16@le.ac.uk

t: +44 (0)116 252 2848

f: +44 (0)116 252 2614

e: ulas@le.ac.uk



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