

**An Archaeological Evaluation on
land to the rear of
8 Bowling Green Street, Leicester.
NGR: SK 588 042**

Andrew Hyam
September 2006

Planning permission Ref: 20042124
Client: CGF Estates

Checked by Project Manager

Signed: **Date:**.....

Name:

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

Report No.2006-119 © ULAS 2006

Contents

Summary	1
Introduction	1
Background	2
Archaeological Objectives	3
Methodology	3
Results	4
Discussion	4
Archive	5
Publication	5
Bibliography	5
Acknowledgements	5
Appendix 1. Figures and plates	6

**An Archaeological Evaluation on
land to the rear of
8 Bowling Green Street, Leicester.
NGR: SK 588 042**

Summary

A small scale evaluation was undertaken for CGF Estates by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 23rd and 24th of August 2006. The purpose of the work was to excavate an evaluation trench in advance of new residential premises on land to the rear of Number 8 Bowling Green Street, Leicester, planning permission: 20042124. The site lies to the south of the Roman and medieval town defences although archaeological evidence suggests activity from these periods may have taken place outside the town and near to the site. Roman burials and a possible kiln site nearby indicated that there was a high potential for uncovering and disturbing any surviving archaeological remains.

The trench, measuring 8.5m x 2.2m, was excavated through a tarmac and brick surface into a thick layer of homogeneous dark grey brown garden soil. The garden soil extended beyond the maximum trench depth of 1.2m below ground level. Later test excavations for piling revealed the garden soil to be 1.6m thick and overlying undisturbed natural orange brown sandy gravel. Service pipes and cellaring activity had caused a great deal of disturbance within the proposed development area.

No evidence of archaeological activity was observed during the evaluation.

Records will be deposited with Leicester City Museum Service, Accession number A25.2006

1. Introduction

The development site is located on the eastern side of Bowling Green Street and between Bishop Street, to the north, and Belvoir Street, to the south (figs 1 and 2). Number 8 is a Grade II listed building with a paved and tarmac rear yard enclosed and surrounded by other properties (plates 1 and 2). Until recently the southeast and southwest corners of the development area contained modern buildings which have now been demolished leaving a deep open-air basement passage running along the length of the southeast boundary.

The initial planning advice was requested for rejuvenating the existing listed building and erecting a new residential block within the area shown in figure 3.

In view of the potential for uncovering archaeological deposits the City Archaeologist recommended that there should be an archaeological evaluation in order to identify whether or not significant deposits exist.

2. Background

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology consists of Mercia Mudstone with overlying river sands and gravels.

The proposed development area is relatively flat with a number of different surfaces of tarmac, brick, concrete and stone sets. The different surfaces probably represent recent phases of building and cellar activity.

The desk-based assessment (Tate 2005) identified a number of Roman finds indicating the possible presence of limited occupation to the south of the town defences. Roman burials and cremation vessels have been discovered in Bowling Green Street, Horsefair Street and Town Hall Square confirming the practice of burying the dead outside the town walls. Limited medieval activity has been recorded in the locality which was not heavily occupied or developed until the 19th century when the existing street layout was built. It is thought that domestic buildings were constructed around the development area at this time.

In 1865 the domestic buildings were demolished to make way for Number 8 which was built for the Borough of Leicester Water Board by Shenton and Baker. During the 1980s it was in use as a juvenile court but has remained unoccupied for a number of years. The 1915 Ordnance Survey map shows a similar layout to that of the present day although structures do appear to extend into the southern corner of the rear yard. At some stage, probably in the 1960s or 1970s, these seem to have been replaced by more modern structures which have recently been demolished.

3. Archaeological Objectives

The objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To excavate and record a sample of any archaeological deposits found during the evaluation.
- To establish the character, extent, date range and significance of any archaeological deposits affected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

4. Methodology

The trench was excavated using a mechanical mini excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket attached to the front actor. All overburden and garden soil was removed in spits under archaeological supervision. The exposed base of trench and natural substratum was inspected for any archaeological features or deposits and the spoil checked for unstratified finds. Limits were placed on the location of the trench in order to prevent undermining of adjacent structures and to avoid any services which may be live and/or disturb any archaeological deposits.

All deposits were recorded by notes and sketches using the standard ULAS proforma recording forms. Plans and sections of the trench were also made at the appropriate scales. Digital colour photographs were taken throughout the work.

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

Additionally two trenches were excavated by Murray Rix Geotechnical Engineering in advance of piling. These were placed at right angles at either end of the evaluation trench. No archaeological intervention took place but the trenches were inspected, photographs were taken and written notes made.

5. Results

The trench, measuring 8.5m x 2.2m, was located midway between the rear wall of No. 8 and the northwest boundary wall (fig 4 and plate 3). A number of cast iron service pipes and footings of a brick wall running north to south across the eastern side of the yard indicated that there would be a certain level of disturbance and so this area was avoided. After removing the brick and tarmac surface a dark grey-brown clayish sandy-silt garden soil was observed. This continued down as the same homogeneous fill to the maximum trench depth of 1.2m below ground level. Because of the proximity of surrounding buildings it was not possible to excavate a stepped trench so the excavation ended at 1.2m.

4.5m from the north end of the trench was a double thickness brick wall foundation running parallel to the back wall of Number 8 and extending into the base of the trench. The bricks, as with all bricks observed in this trench, measured 8cm x 10cm x 25cm and are probably 19th century in origin. Either side of this feature was the same garden soil fill. At the north end of the trench was another double thickness brick wall again parallel to Number 8. To the south side of this wall was a very mixed fill with modern debris in which appeared to be the backfill of a cellar.

No archaeological features or artefacts were observed or recovered from this trench.

The piling trench at the north edge of the site revealed the natural substratum to consist of an orangey-brown sandy gravel approximately 1.6m below ground level. A possible pit backfilled with a red clay marl mix was noted in the north east end but no archaeological material was recovered.

At the south edge of the site the piling trench revealed a very disturbed area with a number of walls extending down to the natural sand and gravel at 1.6m below ground level.

6. Discussion

Despite the high potential no archaeological deposits, features or pre-modern artefacts were encountered during this evaluation.

7. Archive

The archive consists of site notes, sketches and digital photographs to be held by Leicester City Museum under accession number A25.2006.

8. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. An OASIS record will also be produced and this report will be uploaded on to the Archaeology Data Service website.

9. Bibliography

EDINA/Digimap. <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>

Tate. J. An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of land to the rear of 8 Bowling Green Street, Leicester. ULAS report No: 2005-133

10. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken by A R Hyam and J Jackson. The project was managed by R Buckley.

Andrew Hyam
September 2006
University of Leicester Archaeological Services
University of Leicester
University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH Tel; (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

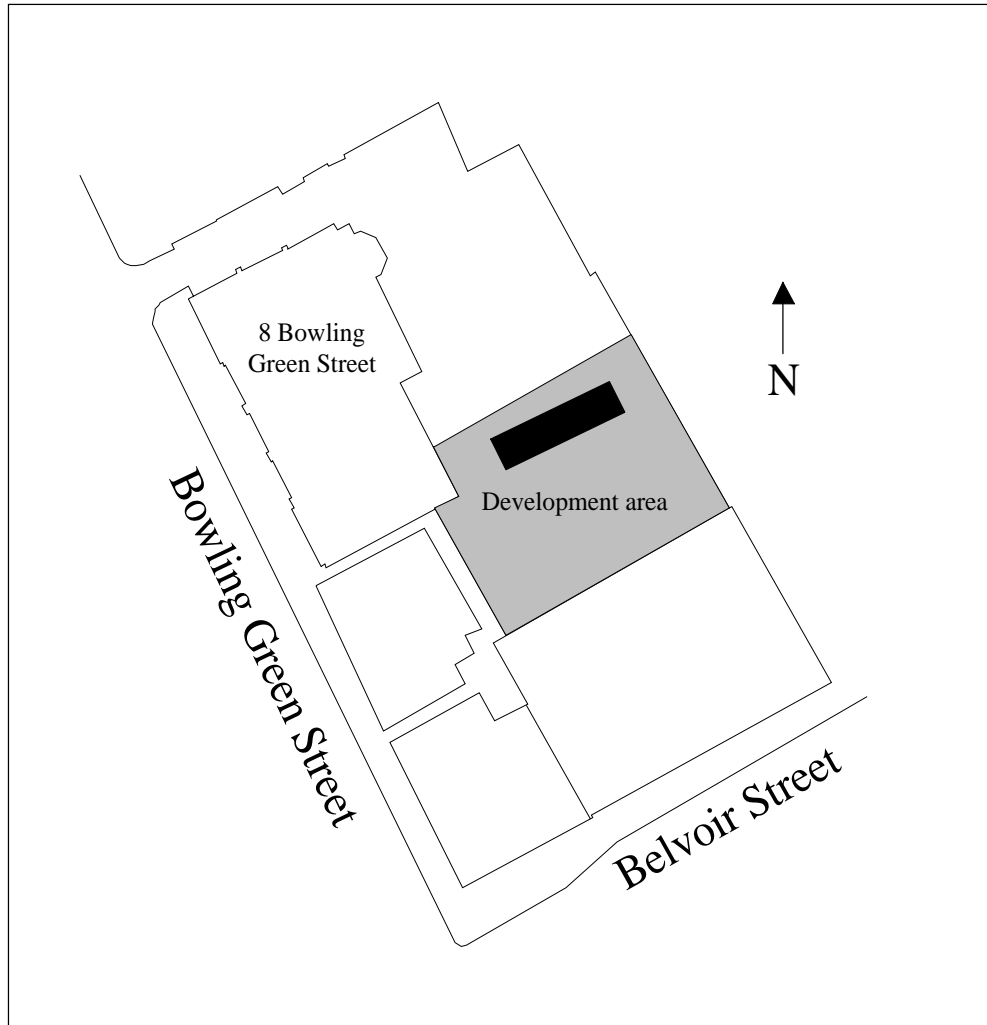
Appendix 1. Figures and Plates



Figure 1: Leicester Site within black box area.
Source: Ordnance Survey/EDINA



Fig. 2: Location of development site (hatched area).
Source: Ordnance Survey/EDINA



*Figure 3: Development area with trench shown in black.
Source: Modified from Boden Associates Blockplan drawing (20)06*

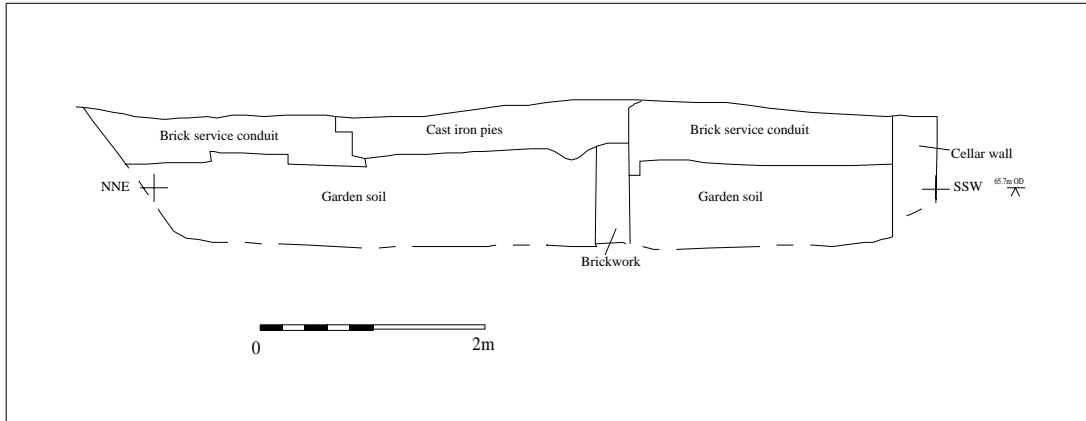


Figure.4: North facing section of evaluation trench.



Plate 1. Trench location before excavation. Looking north.



Plate 2. Trench location before excavation. Looking east.



Plate 3. Evaluation trench. Looking south.