



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**

Archaeological Services

**An archaeological evaluation of land at  
the corner of Camden Street and Earl  
Street, Leicester**

**NGR: SK 59136 04767**

**Mathew Morris**



**ULAS Report No. 2018-192**

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Street, Leicester**

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**Mathew Morris**

**For: XWR Ltd.**

**Planning Application: 20170180**

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## **An archaeological evaluation of land at the corner of Camden Street and Earl Street, Leicester (SK 59136 04767)**

**Mathew Morris**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out on land at the corner of Camden Street and Earl Street, Leicester (SK 59136 04767) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 19 November, 2018. Work was undertaken for XWR Ltd. in order to establish the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits which may be present, in order that an assessment may be made of the impact of any proposed development on the buried remains. The application area comprised a c.170m sq area of hard standing. One 11m by 1.8m trench was excavated to achieve a 12% sample of the development area. The evaluation produced limited evidence for late 19th-century and early 20th-century residential activity – namely a brick-lined well and a ceramic service pipe. No other archaeological features or deposits were recorded. On the balance of evidence recorded during the investigation, it would appear that ground across the application area was extensively reworked in the past, first through arable cultivation which dated back to the medieval period and probably further, then later in the 19th-century by domestic activity and most recently by the construction of industrial buildings in the late 20th century. No evidence was found to suggest other archaeological activity was taking place in the area. The archive will be held by Leicester Arts & Museum Service under the accession number Y.A22.2018.*

### **Introduction**

In November 2018, University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching of land at the corner Camden Street and Earl Street, Leicester (SK 59136 04767 - Figure 1). The work was undertaken for XWR Ltd. to establish the nature, extent, date, and significance of any archaeological deposits which might be present, in order that an assessment may be made of the impact of any proposed development on the buried remains.

In advance of the proposed construction of a six storey block of eleven flats (Planning Application 20170180), the City Archaeologist as advisor to Leicester City Council requested a phase of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching, including a Written Scheme of Investigation (Morris 2018), be undertaken in order to assess the potential impact of the proposed scheme on any archaeology, and implement an appropriate mitigation strategy as necessary. This was in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (MHCLG 2018).

Archaeological work took place on 19 November, 2018. This document presents the results of the archaeological investigation.

### **Site Location, Geology and Topography**

The application area comprised a rectangular plot covering c.170m<sup>2</sup> on the corner of Camden Street and Earl Street, approximately 400 m east of Leicester city centre at SK 59136 04767 (Figure 1). At the time of work the site was vacant concrete hardstanding.



The British Geological Survey shows that the underlying geology was likely to consist of superficial head deposits of Quaternary period clay, silt, sand and gravel overlying bedrock deposits of Triassic period mudstone of the Branscombe Mudstone Formation (BGS Open Geoscience). The application area lay on flat ground at approximately 57m aOD.

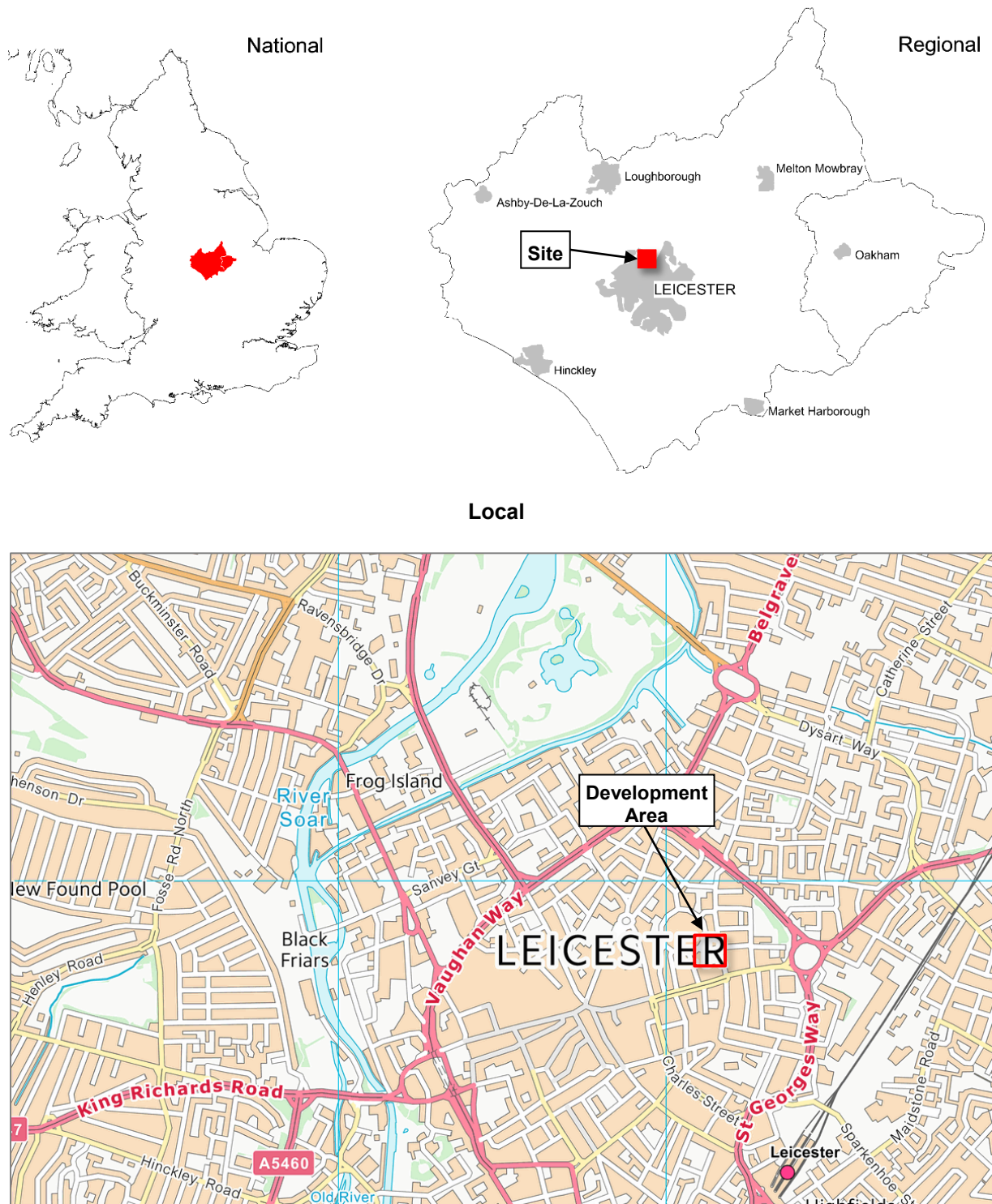


Figure 1: Site location with project area highlighted (contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2016).

## Archaeological and Historical Background

Reconstructed maps of Roman Leicester showed that the development area lay to the east of the historic town limits. However, it did lie relatively close to the route of the Roman Fosse Way (now Belgrave Gate) running out of the city to the north-west of the site and therefore the area was in a typical location for extra-mural cemeteries or other small-scale ribbon development.

The site also lay outside the eastern limit of the post-Roman town close to an area of large houses and gardens fronting onto Humberstone Gate and forming part of the town's east suburb. Cartographic evidence from the early 17th century to the early 19th century showed that the area was still open and undeveloped, possibly used as garden or field. As the east suburb grew in the mid-19th century, large areas of open ground north of Humberstone Gate were developed, with dense terraced housing and industrial buildings lining the streets. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey town plan of 1886 shows a row of three terraced houses on the site, fronting onto Camden Street with backyards and a number of small outbuildings to the rear.

The site remained largely unchanged until the early 1950s, when post-World War II clearance of 'slum' housing saw the majority of the terrace housing and smaller industrial buildings in the area replaced by large industrial and commercial buildings. Ordnance Survey maps showed the site still occupied by terraced housing in 1938. These were replaced by a large square building by 1954, which had also been demolished by the 1986 edition of the map and the site had remained open since.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicester indicated that there were no known archaeological sites within the site boundary. This was due to no previous work being carried out there rather than an absence of potential archaeological remains. There were, however, a number of known sites and historic buildings within a 250m radius of the site (Kerr-Peterson 2017). Those relevant to the site are mentioned below.

- Prehistoric: There were no known prehistoric sites within a 250m radius of the site, but a possible Mesolithic mace head was found at Wharf Street, c. 300m to the north of the site.
- Roman: Previous archaeological work had identified a number of archaeological deposits including Roman burials and evidence for Roman settlement in the form of pottery and post holes in the area of the Roman Fosse Way, c. 200m to the west of the site. A number of lead coffins, of unknown date, were found c. 200m to the north-west of the site. Roman suburban settlement was found in the area beyond Eastgate, c. 300m to the south-west of the site. Roman pottery was found c. 130m to the north-west of the site.
- Anglo-Saxon: There were no known Anglo-Saxon sites within a 250m radius of the site.
- Medieval: Medieval settlement and agricultural activity had also been identified in the form of finds of pottery, pits and evidence of medieval ploughing in the Haymarket and Clarence Street areas, c. 200m to the west of the site. Evidence for medieval suburban settlement and industrial activity in the form of tanning was identified to the east of the medieval walled town, c. 300m to the south-west of the site. Further evidence of medieval settlement came from findspots. The closest of these was a 15th century coin found at Southampton Street, c. 230m to the south-east.

- Post medieval: Post-medieval industrial and social activity was identified from the recording of a number of post-medieval industrial buildings including the hide, skin & fat market and the Alexandra House & Wimbledon Mills factory complexes, situated c. 250m and 200m to the south-east of the site respectively.

## Archaeological Objectives

The principle aims of the archaeological excavation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of archaeological deposits
- To establish the character, extent, and date range of any archaeological deposits, artefacts and ecofacts to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To appropriately record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To establish the relationship between any remains found and the surrounding contemporary landscape.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

The results of the investigation were also considered in light of the East Midlands Research Agenda (Cooper 2006) and updated Agenda and Strategy (Knight et. al 2012), particularly:

*The Roman Period (Taylor 2006, Knight et. al 2012)*

- Growth of urban centre (Knight et. al 2012, 5.3):
  - 5.3.4 - How were towns organised, what roles did they perform and how may their morphology and functions have varied over time?
  - 5.3.5 - How and why did the urban landscape change in the late Roman period, and what roles may fortifications have played in this period?
- Ritual and Religion (Knight et. al 2012, 5.8):
  - 5.8.4 - Why have so few early Roman burials been found, and may practices have varied regionally and between different communities?
  - 5.8.5 - What may studies of later Roman inhumation cemeteries tell us about changing burial practices and demography?

*The Medieval period (Lewis 2006, Knight et. al 2012)*

- Urbanism (Knight et. al 2012, 7.1):
  - 7.1.1 - How did the major towns and smaller market towns of the region develop after the Norman Conquest, both within the urban core and in suburban and extra-mural areas?
  - 7.1.2 - Can we define more closely the industrial and trading activities associated with towns and the nature and extent of urban influence upon the countryside?

*The Post-medieval period (Courtney 2006, Knight et. al 2012)*

- Urbanism: morphology, functions and buildings (Knight et. al 2012, 8.1)
  - 8.1.5 - Can we recognise the emergence of the poorer classes in the developing suburbs?



The research aims were reviewed and updated as work progressed and new information came to light.



*Figure 2: Looking south-east across the development area, with the mechanical digger excavating Trench 1.*

## **Methodology**

During the evaluation, modern concrete, overburden and soil was removed in level spits under continuous archaeological supervision down to the uppermost archaeological deposits or the natural substratum, depending on which was reached first. This was carried out with a 6 tonne 360° mechanical digger using a concrete breaker, 0.6m toothed bucket to remove concrete, and a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket (Figure 2).

All trenches, open areas, exposed sections, and spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and artefacts. Features were hand cleaned, planned, photographed and sample excavated as appropriate. Field notes were recorded on pro-forma ULAS urban trench recording forms whilst stratigraphic units were, as necessary, given a unique context number and recorded on proforma ULAS context sheets. Trench and feature plans/sections were drawn at appropriate scales and tied into the National Grid using appropriate methods. A photographic record of the excavation was prepared, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. Colour digital photographs were taken throughout the excavation. The photographic record also included ‘working shots’ to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.



All work followed the approved written scheme of investigation (Morris 2018) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) *Code of Conduct* (2014a) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014b).

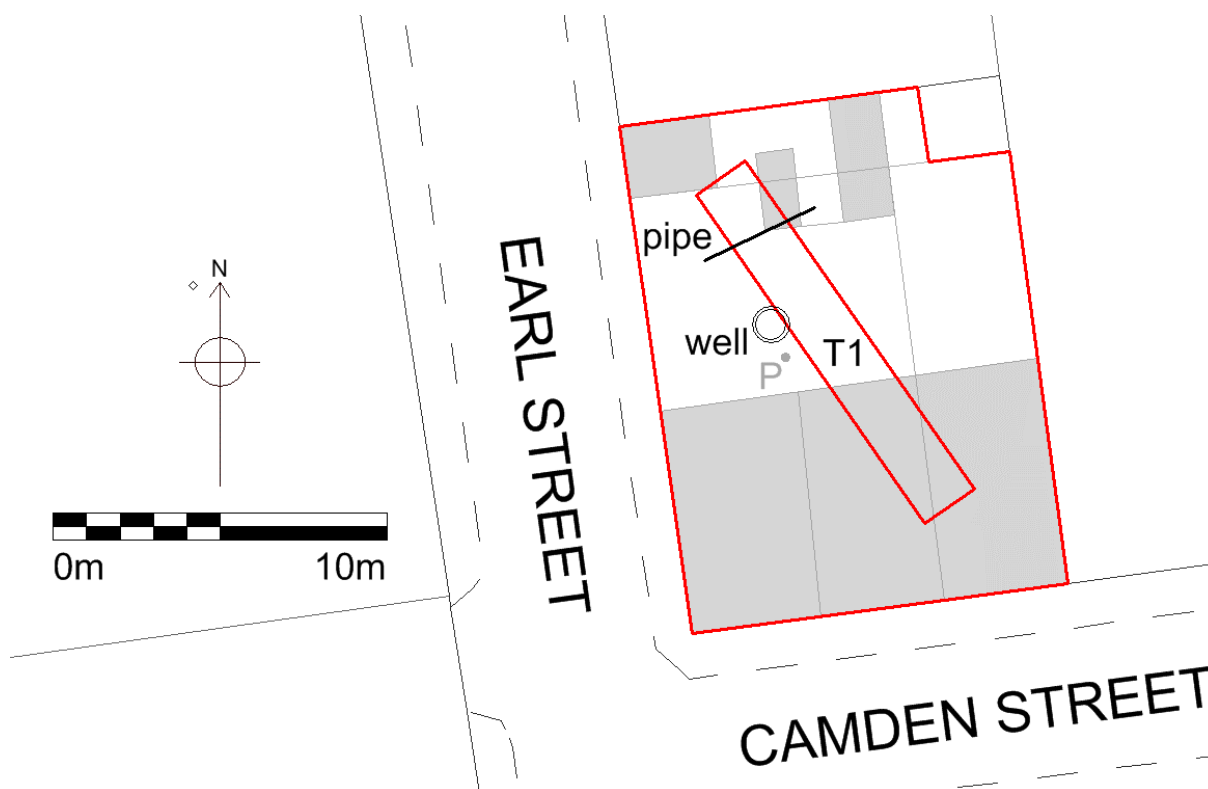


Figure 3: Plan of the application area showing trench locations (red), observations (black) and former 19th-century buildings (grey). Background map provided by client.

## Results

At the direction of the City Archaeologists, the written scheme of investigation (Morris 2018) provided for the investigation of one 12m by 2m trench (totalling 24m<sup>2</sup>) to achieve a c.14% sample of the 170 sq m application area (Figure 3). Due to on-site constraints, namely the constricting boundaries around the site (Figure 2), it was only possible to excavate an 11m by 1.8m trench (19.8 sq m or a c.12% sample of the development area).

Table 1: Summary of Trench 1 information

Length (m)	Width (m)		Area (sq m)	Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)
11	1.8		19.8	0.6		1.1
Interval (m) from NW	1	4	8	10	to SE	
Overburden depth	0.3	0.12	0.11	0.14		
Cultivation soil depth	0.3	0.72	0.79	0.7		
Subsoil depth	-	0.2	0.2	0.1		
Top of natural substratum	-	1.04	1.1	0.94		
Base of trench	0.6	1.04	1.1	0.94		

## ***Trench 1***

Trench 1 was positioned diagonally across the site, broadly orientated north-west to south-east. Concrete hardstanding and modern overburden, up to c.0.3m thick, was removed with a concrete break and toothed bucket, exposing dark brown grey clayey-silt. This appeared to be a cultivation or garden soil up to c.0.8m thick, but few finds were observed (occasional flecks of charcoal, bone and shell) and no dateable evidence was recovered from it. The soil overlay a thin subsoil of orange grey clayey-sandy-silt, up to c.0.2m thick. The natural substratum, yellow orange clayey-sand and gravel with lenses of reddish brown clay, was reached at the bottom of the trench, c.1-1.1m below ground level (Figure 4, left).



*Figure 4: Left, looking south-east at Trench 1 with modern service pipe in foreground and well in the middle ground to the right. Right, the brick-lined well.*

At the north-west end of the trench, c.0.6m below ground level, a ceramic sewage pipe was exposed in the cultivation soil. This was left in-situ. During machining, the mechanical digger also exposed a brick-lined well on the western side of the trench, c.4-5m from its north end (Figure 4, right). This was c.0.9m in diameter and at least 7m deep, and was capped with large slabs of Swithland slate. As the open well was a danger, it was backfilled with concrete and brick rubble from the site at the end of the excavation. At the south-east end of the trench, on the Camden Street frontage, a brick floor and possible shallow brick foundations were present beneath the concrete hardstanding. All three features appeared to be of late 19th- or 20th-century date.

## **Discussion**

Overall, the results of the archaeological investigation were negative, aside for a mid-late 19th-century well and brick floor, and a modern service pipe. The brick floor on Camden Street most

likely related to a terrace of three houses which were built on the frontage sometime between 1828 and 1844. The brick well too, was likely associated with these properties and a pump in a broadly corresponding position is marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey town plan of 1887.

The 19th-century terrace was built directly on the dark cultivation/garden soil. This soil's thickness and the scarcity of artefactual evidence within it were both consistent with prolonged arable cultivation in the area prior to the construction of the housing. Small quantities of charcoal, bone and shell in the soil suggested that the soil was being enriched with some domestic waste in the medieval and/or post-medieval period, most likely midden material being used as manure. This was consistent with historic maps of the area. Robert's town plan of 1741 shows the development area as open ground, part of the borough's east field, on the north side of Humberstone Gate. Whilst Fowler's plan of 1828 shows the area to be open ground, probably garden to the rear of properties on Humberstone Gate. By the time Burton's plan was published in 1844 the area was fully developed, with Camden Street and Earl Street both established and lined with factories and terraced houses.

## **Conclusion**

The evaluation has produced limited evidence for 19th-century and 20th-century residential activity – namely a brick-lined well and a ceramic service pipe. No other archaeological features or deposits were found. On the balance of evidence recorded during the investigation, it would appear that ground across the application area was extensively reworked in the past, first through arable cultivation which dated back to the medieval period and probably further, then later in the 19th-century by domestic activity and most recently by the construction of industrial buildings in the later 20th century. No evidence was found to suggest other archaeological activity was taking place in the area.

## **Archive**

The site archive consists of 1 trench record sheet, 9 digital photographs and a photo index. The archive will be held by Leicester Arts & Museum Service under the accession number Y.A22.2018.

## **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 (see Table 2).

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in an appropriate local archaeological journal in due course.

## **Acknowledgements**

ULAS would like to extend its thanks to our client, XWR Ltd. and to Sandeep Singh, for their assistance and co-operation throughout the project; and also to Graham Appleby, City Archaeologists for Leicester City Council, for his advice and support; and JoinPoint for the mechanical assistance. Mathew Morris completed the fieldwork and this report. The project was managed for ULAS by John Thomas.

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Version 1: 29-11-2018



Table 2: Summary of OASIS information

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1-335354		
	<b>Project Name</b>	An Archaeological Evaluation of land at the corner of Camden Street and Earl Street, Leicester		
	<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	19-11-2018		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	none / not known		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Evaluation by trial trenching		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Vacant		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	None / none		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	None / none		
	<b>Development Type</b>	Urban residential		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	After full determination (e.g. as a condition)		
	<b>Planning Ref.</b>	20170180		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Corner of Camden Street & Earl Street		
	<b>Study Area</b>	170 sq m		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK 59136 04767		
	<b>Height OD</b>	57m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	John Thomas		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	John Thomas		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Mathew Morris		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Developer		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	-	Leic. Arts & Mus. Service	Leic. Arts & Mus. Service
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>	-	Y.A22.2018	Y.A22.2018
	<b>Contents</b>	-	Photos Report	Trench record Photo index Report
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	<b>Title</b>	An archaeological evaluation of land at the corner of Camden Street and Earl Street, Leicester (SK 59136 04767)		
	<b>Author</b>	Morris, M.		
	<b>Other bibliographic details</b>	ULAS Report No 2018-192		
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