



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation of land at
Freemens Common,
Leicester
NGR: SK 59041 02579(centre)**

Adam Clapton



**ULAS Report No. 2019-016
©2019**

**An Archaeological Evaluation of land at
Freemens Common,
Leicester,**

SK 59041 02579(centre)

Adam Clapton

For: University of Leicester

Filename/Version	Checked by	Date
2019-016	Richard Buckley	1/2/2019

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

ULAS Report Number 2019-016
©2019
Accession Number-Y.A2.2019

Contents

Summary	1
Introduction.....	1
Site Description, Topography and Geology.....	2
Archaeological and Historical Background	4
Aims and Objectives	4
Research Objectives.....	5
Methodology	6
Results.....	8
Trench 1	8
Trench 2	9
Trench 3	10
Discussion and Conclusion.....	11
Archive and publication.....	12
References.....	12
Acknowledgements.....	12
OASIS data	12

Figures

Figure 1: Site Location (red outline).....	2
Figure 2: Development areas (in red).	3
Figure 3: Freemens Common car park before excavation, looking south-east.....	3
Figure 4: Proposed trench plan (black) and excavated trenches (red) over proposed development.....	6
Figure 5: Proposed trench plan (black) and excavated trenches (red) over current standing buildings and site constraints.	7
Figure 6: Trench 1 looking north (2 x 1m scales).....	8
Figure 7: Trench 2 looking north-west (2 x 1m scales).	9
Figure 8: Modern dump of material in trench 2 looking south-west (2 x 1m scales).....	10
Figure 9: Trench 3 looking south (2 x 1m scales).	11

**An Archaeological Evaluation of land at Freemens Common,
Leicester,
SK 59041 02579(centre)**

Adam Clapton

Summary

This document is a fieldwork report for an archaeological trial trench evaluation, carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) of land at Freemens Common, Leicester (SK 59041 02579) in advance of the construction of student accommodation, academic buildings and multi storey car park by the University of Leicester.

The proposed development site covers an area of 3.10ha comprising land at Welford Road, Freemens Common, Putney Road, and Nixon Court currently in use by the University of Leicester for car parking, student accommodation and offices. The old 'Dry Dock' public house also sits within the development area.

A desk based assessment undertaken in 2017 identified the potential for archaeological remains on site.

A total of 16 trenches were proposed across the development area, but after the excavation of 3 trenches, all of which were negative archaeologically, it became apparent that due to considerable modern disturbance from buildings yet to be demolished, previous landscaping of the development area and site constraints that the survival of archaeological remains was highly unlikely. Therefore the City Archaeologist agreed to waive the need to excavate the remaining 13 trenches.

Modern demolition material and root disturbance was observed in the excavated trenches along with the presence of modern services. No archaeological deposits were observed.

The archive for the site will be deposited with Leicester City Museum Service with accession number Y.A2.2019.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for trial trenching of land at Freemens Common, Leicester (Figure 1). It details the programme of archaeological trial trenching that was undertaken in January 2019 and follows the strategy of work set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (Buckley 2018).

A planning application (20180450) has been submitted by the University of Leicester for the demolition of buildings; construction of eight blocks of between four and fourteen storeys high to provide 1200 student bed spaces (no class use); six storey academic building (Class D1); nine storey multi-storey car park with 550 spaces (no class use); vehicle access from Putney Road; extension and alterations to Grade II listed building and the removal of trees covered by tree protection orders (Figure 2). The Leicester City Council Planning Archaeologist as

archaeological advisor to the planning authority, requested an archaeological field evaluation to identify and record any archaeological remains of significance in order to determine the impact of the proposed scheme on any buried archaeology.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

Freemens Common is an area within Southfields, Leicester, around 1 mile south of the city centre. The proposed development site covers an area of 3.10ha comprising of land at Welford Road, Freemens Common, Putney Road, and Nixon Court currently in use by the University of Leicester for car parking, student accommodation and offices. The old 'Dry Dock' public house also sits within the development area. Putney Road runs through the development area from east-west and Welford Road bounds the area to the east. The site sits at the top of a hill which overlooks central Leicester from the south. The site lies at a height of *c.*82m aOD (Figure 3).

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying bedrock geology throughout the site is likely to be Branscombe Mudstone Formation - Mudstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 200 to 217 million years ago in the Triassic Period. Local environment previously dominated by hot deserts.

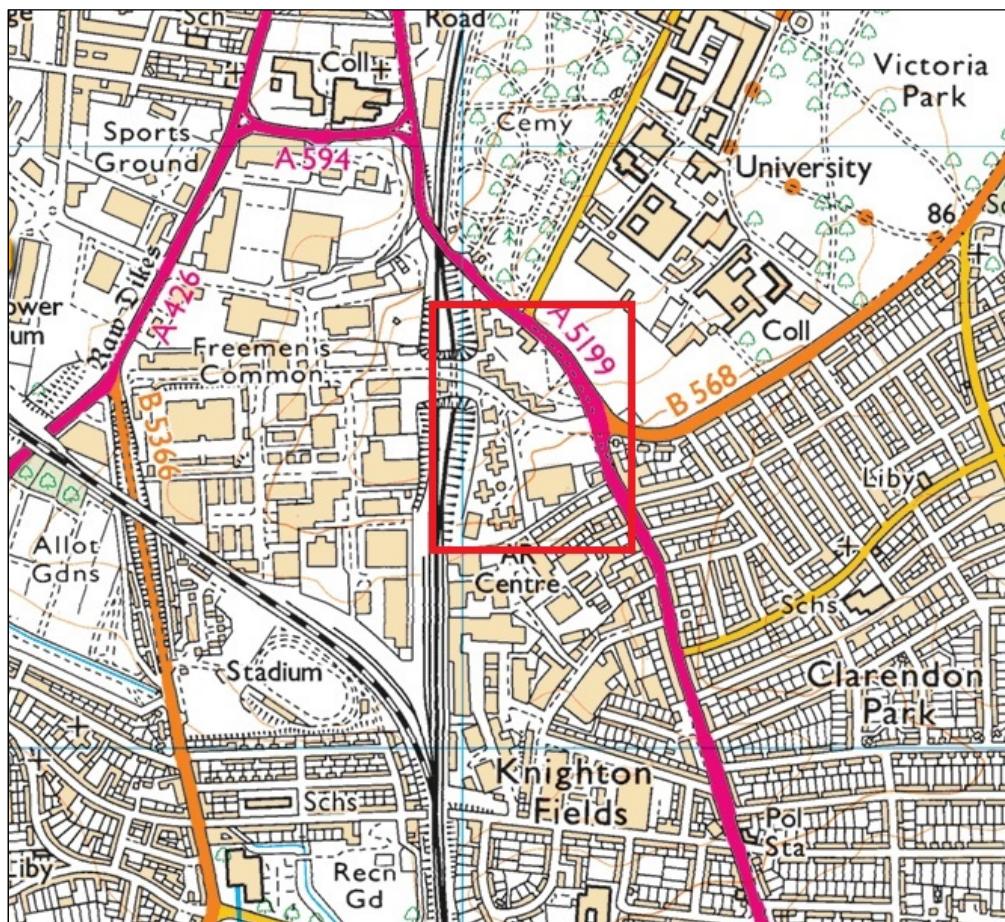


Figure 1: Site Location (red outline)

1:25000 © Crown copyright 2010 All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495.

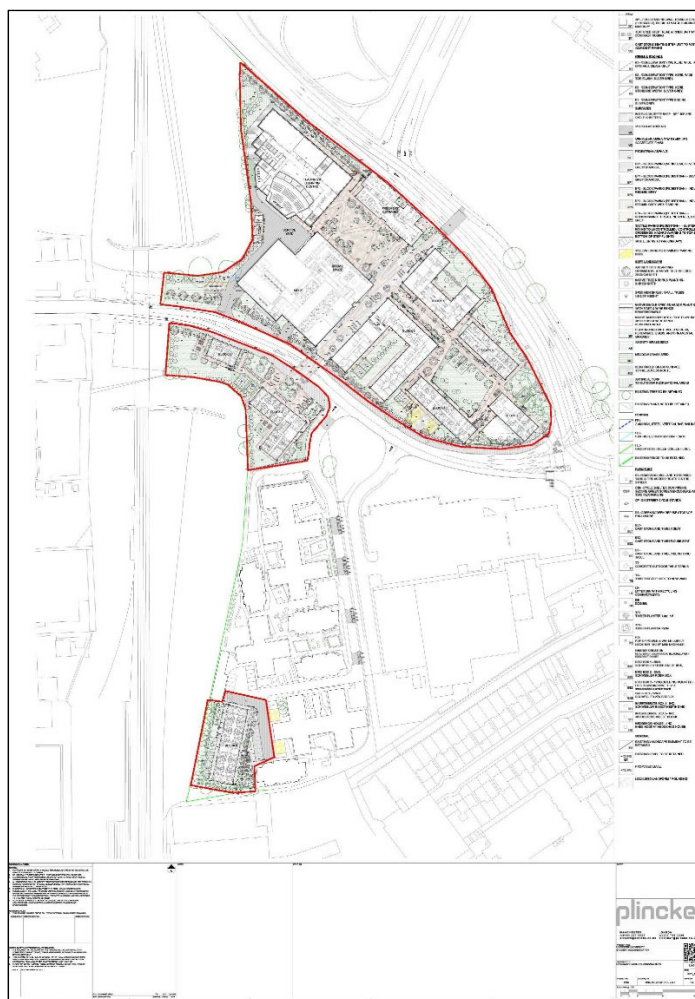


Figure 2: Development areas (in red).



Figure 3: Freemens Common car park before excavation, looking south-east.

Archaeological and Historical Background

The site was subject to a desk-based assessment (LaCombe 2017) which identified a number of archaeological and historical areas surrounding the site. The South Fields were granted to the Burgesses of Leicester by Simon de Montfort during the 13th century. In 1630, the South Fields comprised 614 acres of arable and pasture land, extending from Horsefair Street to the old town boundary with Knighton Parish (the present-day Victoria Park Road). The land between Welford Road and London Road was known as St. Mary's Field, with Gallowtree Field lying to the north of this. Following the Enclosure Act of 1804, the South Fields were divided and much of the land was sold (although much was retained for municipal works such as the cemetery and the Gas Works). In 1806, the south-east part of the South Fields (the present Victoria Park) was used for Horse Racing (Boynton 2000). Much of the land on the South Fields was rented out as allotments until the late 19th century, but in 1700 large deposits of clay were discovered in the area and so the rented land was also used for brick making. These brick fields extended from Highfields to the north, through the land now occupied by Regent College, across Lancaster Road to the land that would become the Welford Road Cemetery and down to Knighton Junction brickyard. The land at Regent College was later used by Alderman Newton Schools as a playing field.

Roman finds close to the development area include a coin said to be of Trajan (98-117) (**MLC1141**) and a colour-coat beaker found at the former Midland Railway tunnel (**MLC1147**). A post mill has been recorded close to the development area (**MLC302**) probably built by 1316, and mentioned during the C16th. It is possibly marked on Ogilby's map of 1675. In 1722 the mill was referred to as a post mill standing on a mound very close to Welford Road, however, the mill is recorded as having been moved in 1721, and was moved again in 1810. The mill was finally demolished in 1848 to make way for the cemetery. A number of post-medieval buildings are recorded in the area including mortuary chapels at Welford Road Cemetery (**MLC2318**, **MLC2319**) to the north-east and the mid-19th century County Lunatic Asylum (**MLC1842**) to the east. A group of almshouses known as Freeman's Cottages (**MLC2010**) built in Gothic style in 3 blocks between 1856 and 1893 lie within the north-eastern boundary of the development. Freeman's Cottage 161 (**DLC433**) is Grade II listed. Freeman's Cottages are of historic importance for their association with the Freeman of Leicester and represent an interesting example of relatively unaltered almshouses dating from the Victorian period.

Cartographic evidence suggests that the site has remained agricultural in nature since at least the post-medieval period. However, the area has been disturbed in recent times with the construction of buildings, car-parks and other possible earthmoving.

Aims and Objectives

The general objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development site
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site

- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to assess the impact of the proposed development on cultural heritage and to help formulate a mitigation strategy
- To record any archaeological deposits and produce an archive and report of any results.

The results of the evaluation will provide information in order for the local planning authority to make informed recommendations and to identify an appropriate mitigation strategy for the proposed development.

Research Objectives

Initial Research objectives were derived from East Midlands Heritage research agenda (Cooper 2006, Knight *et al.* 2012) and include:

Prehistoric – Bronze Age/Iron Age

Research Objective 4B - refine first millennium BC ceramic chronology by additional radiocarbon dating and typological analyses;

Research Objective 4C - Characterise the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlement resource and investigate intra-regional variability.

Research Objective 4E - Assess the evidence for the evolution of settlement hierarchies;

Research Objective 4F - Investigate intra-regional variations in the development of fields and linear boundary systems;

Research Objective 4G - Study the production, distribution and use of artefacts;

Roman

Research Objective 5A - Create Regional pottery corpora and publish key production centres,

Research Objective 5B Support the dissemination and synthesis of information on Roman finds

Research Objective 5C - Promote the systematic application of scientific dating techniques to sites of the Roman period;

Research Objective 5D Support the application of scientific analysis to human remains

Research Objective 5E - Promote the integration of specialist studies of material relating to subsistence, diet and health

Research Objective 5F Develop public and professional access to Lincoln and Leicester Urban Archaeological Databases as a basis for further work

Research Objective 5G Promote further synthesis of secondary urban centres and targeted post-excavation analysis and publication

Research Objective 5H - Investigate the landscape context of rural settlements.

Research Objective 5I -Support Research and publication of landscape syntheses

Research Objective 5J Instigate regional scale characterisation study of industry

Medieval - Early

Research Objective 6A - Elucidate the chronology and demography of the Roman to Anglo-Saxon transition period;

Research Objective 6C - Review the evidence for developing settlement hierarchies;

Research Objective 6F- Identify cultural boundaries in the Early Medieval period,

Medieval

Research Objective 7E- Investigate the morphology of rural settlements;

Research Objective 7I- Investigate the development of the open-field system and medieval woodland management

Research Objective 7F - Investigate development, structure and landholdings of manorial estate centres

Methodology

All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2014b) and adhered to their Code of Conduct (2014a). The archaeological work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological evaluation prepared by ULAS and agreed with the Leicester City Council Planning Archaeologist (December 2018). The work was monitored by the client (University of Leicester) and Leicester City Council Planning Archaeologist.

An accession number (Y.A2.2019) was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts

A total of 16 trenches each measuring 30m long was proposed targeting areas affected by the development. Following the excavation of three, 15m long trenches within Freemens Common car park it became apparent that due to considerable modern disturbance from buildings yet to be demolished, previous landscaping of the development area and site constraints that the survival of archaeological remains was highly unlikely. Therefore the City Archaeologist agreed to waive the need to excavate the remaining 13 trenches (Figures 4-5).

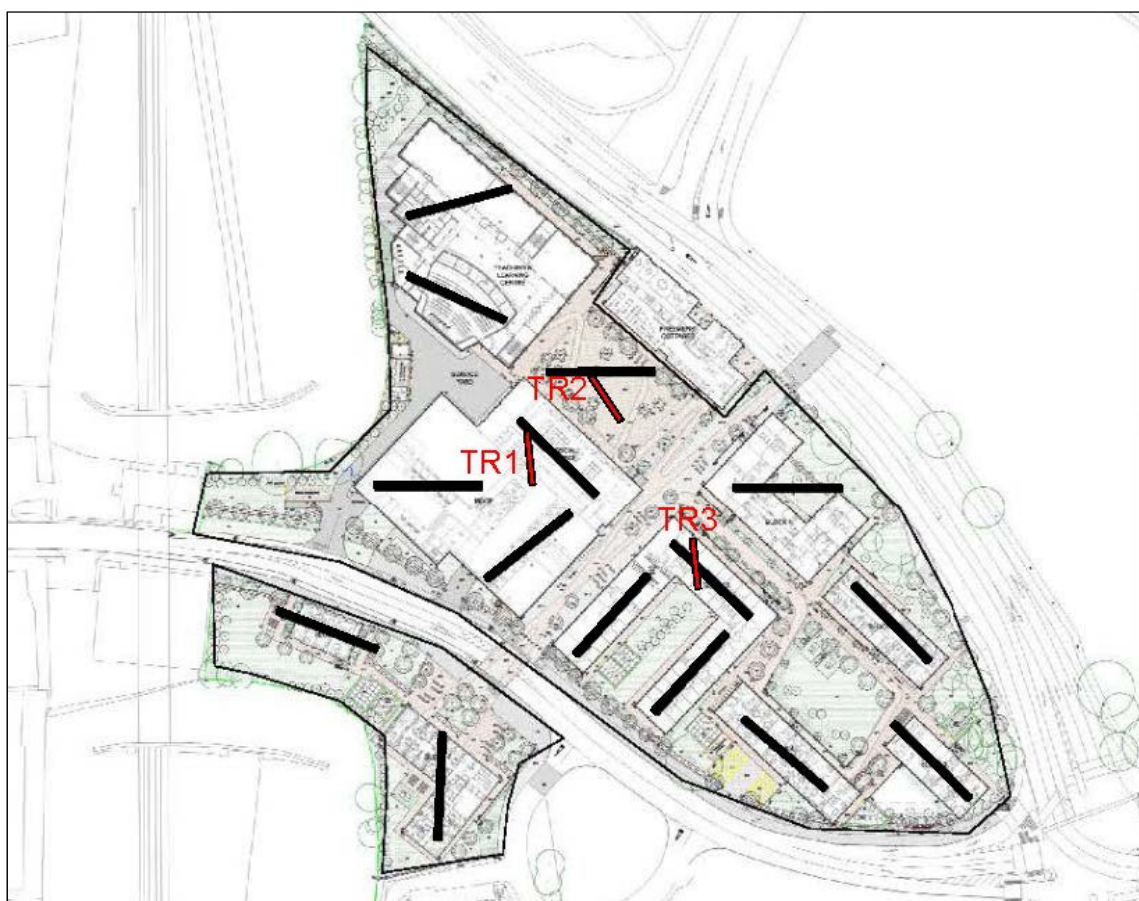


Figure 4: Proposed trench plan (black) and excavated trenches (red) over proposed development.



Figure 5: Proposed trench plan (black) and excavated trenches (red) over current standing buildings and site constraints.

Excavation was carried out with a machine appropriate for the work and fitted with a flat-bladed 1.6m wide bucket. Overburden was removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision and separated as instructed by the developer. The trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed ground, whichever was encountered first. Heras fencing was erected around the trenches to prevent public access.

The ULAS recording manual was used as a guide for all recording. Individual descriptions of archaeological strata were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets.

Excavated trench locations were recorded by an appropriate method and be tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A photographic record of the investigations was prepared, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered and their location and context. The primary photographic record was by digital camera and the record also included overall site and working shots' which illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

After completion of the trenching and following prior agreement with the Planning Archaeologist, the trenches were re-instated by Total Reclaims Demolition as instructed by the developer.

Results

Overburden across the excavated trenches consisted of sandy stone hardcore overlain by a thin layer of tarmac forming the carpark surface. Underlying this the subsoil consisted of brownish grey silty clay with occasional modern debris and demolition material inclusions. A thin layer of buried topsoil overlaying the subsoil was present in Trench 2 and consisted of a dark greyish brown loamy clay with modern debris and charcoal inclusions. The natural substratum was reached in all trenches and consisted of light pinkish grey clay with occasional pebble inclusions.

Trench 1

Interval	(S) 0m	3m	6m	9m	12m	15m (N)
Overburden Depth	0.44m	0.38m	0.38m	0.36m	0.43m	0.39m
Subsoil Depth	0.2m	0.2m	0.21m	0.24m	0.24m	Top of Service
Depth of Natural	0.64m	0.58m	0.59m	0.60m	0.67m	
Base of Trench	0.67m	0.68m	0.64m	0.72m	0.69m	0.41m

A field drain was observed running east-west across the trench at its southern end and a further modern service was seen at the north end of the trench. Tree root disturbance was seen truncating the natural substratum throughout the trench. No archaeological deposits were observed (Figure 6).

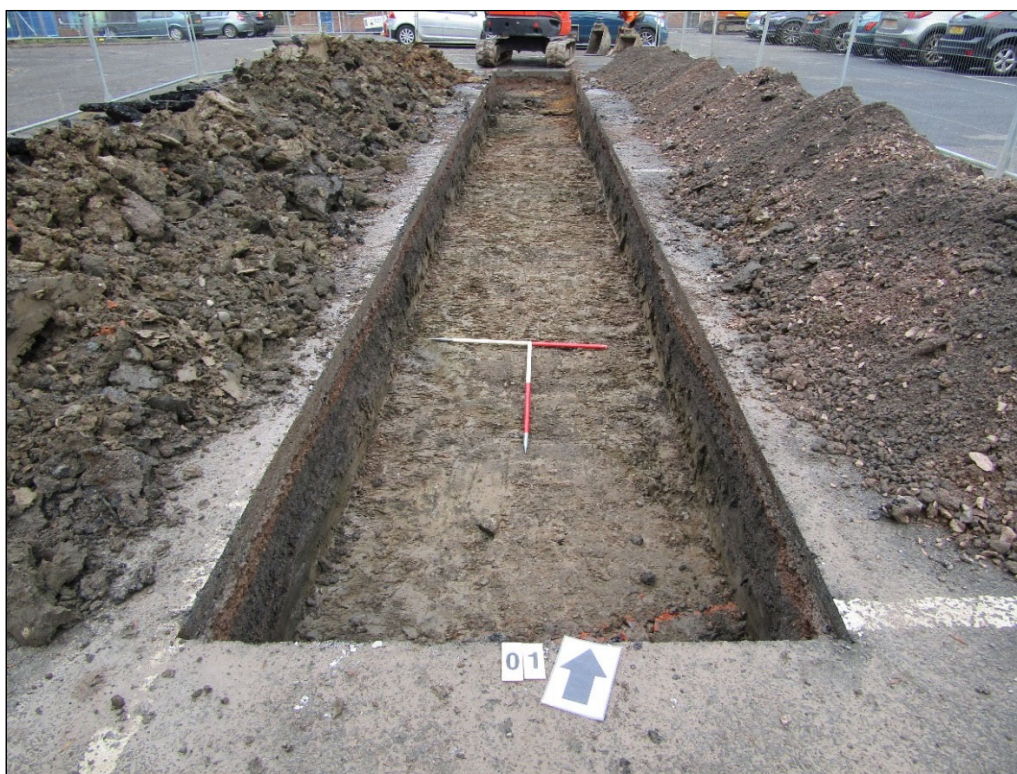


Figure 6: Trench 1 looking north (2 x 1m scales).

Trench 2

Interval	(SE) 0m	3m	6m	9m	12m	15m (NW)
Overburden Depth	0.25m	0.28m	0.28m	0.24m	0.22m	0.22m
Topsoil Depth	0.08m	0.09m	0.1m	0.09m	0.14m	0.19m
Subsoil Depth	0.17m	0.2m	0.3m	0.25m	0.26m	0.27m
Depth of Natural	0.5m	0.57m	0.68m	0.58m	0.62m	0.68m
Base of Trench	0.53m	0.62m	0.72m	0.66m	0.68m	0.71m

A dump of modern material including wooden fence panels, metal, brick and concrete fence post footings was observed truncating the natural substratum at 3m from the south-east end of the trench. Root disturbance was seen truncating the natural substratum throughout the trench. No archaeological features were observed (Figures 7-8).



Figure 7: Trench 2 looking north-west (2 x 1m scales).



Figure 8: Modern dump of material in trench 2 looking south-west (2 x 1m scales).

Trench 3

Interval	(N) 0m	3m	6m	9m	12.5m
Overburden Depth	0.15m	0.2m	0.17m	0.19m	0.15m
Subsoil Depth	0.17m	0.16m	0.28m	0.30m	0.23m
Depth of Natural	0.32m	0.36m	0.45m	0.49m	0.38m
Base of Trench	0.44m	0.60m	0.60m	0.55m	0.44m

A service running east-west was observed at the south end of the trench and was therefore left unexcavated. Brick debris, wood and roots were observed in the subsoil, truncating the natural substratum in places. No archaeological deposits were observed (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Trench 3 looking south (2 x 1m scales).

Discussion and Conclusion

The proposed development area on land at Freemens Common, Leicester had some potential for archaeological remains due to its proximity to previously identified archaeological and historical areas surrounding the site. Its elevated position overlooking Leicester also indicated it had potential for previously unknown archaeological deposits.

The trial trenches revealed overburden consisting of stone hardcore layers underlying a tarmac surface. Variable depths of silty clay subsoil was present underlying this, which contained fragments of modern demolition material. A thin layer of buried topsoil was present in Trench 2, possibly remaining from the allotment gardens that occupied the site before it was developed in the 1960s.

Modern service trenches were seen in Trenches 1 and 3, and a dump of modern demolition material was observed truncating the natural substratum in Trench 2. Root disturbance was seen truncating the natural substratum in all 3 trenches possibly as a result of trees associated with previous allotments. It was clear in the excavated trenches that a degree of landscaping had occurred when the site was developed from allotments into University buildings in the 1960s. As a consequence, the presence of the carpark, the construction of University buildings, and the Dry Dock Public House, landscaped garden areas (Fig. 5) and truncation from associated services has most likely truncated any potential archaeological deposits. For this reason the evaluation was curtailed after the investigation of the third trench with the agreement of the City Archaeologist.

As no archaeological deposits were identified during the work, the results from this site will not contribute towards the Regional research objectives.

Archive and publication

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicester City Museums Service with accession number Y.A2.2019 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2019-016)
- 3 Trench recording sheets
- 1 Photo Record sheet
- 1 Contact sheet of digital photographs
- 1 CD digital photographs

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.

References

- British Geological Survey (Website) Geology of Britain Viewer. Available at <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed January 2019
- Buckley, R. 2018 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation, University of Leicester, Freemens Common Carpark, Welford Road, Leicester* Ulas WSI 19-038
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) 2014a. Reading: Cifa
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) 2014b *Standards and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*. Reading: Cifa
- DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government) 2018, (Rev.), *National Planning Policy Framework*.
- Knight, D., Blaise, V. and Allen C. 2012. *East Midlands Heritage. An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands*.
- Lacombe, C., 2017 *An archaeological desk-based assessment for land at Freemens Common, Leicester SK 59041 02579(centre)* ULAS Report 2017-060

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Stuart Todd of University of Leicester, Total Reclaims Demolition and Joint Point for their help and cooperation with this project. Adam Clapton and Leon Hunt carried out the trial trenching for ULAS and the project was managed by Richard Buckley.

OASIS data

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-341490
	Project Name	An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Freemens Common, Leicester

	Start/end dates of field work	21-01-19 – 29-01-19		
	Previous/Future Work	unknown		
	Project Type	Evaluation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Built over		
	Monument Type/Period	None		
	Significant Finds/Period	None		
	Development Type	Residential, academic and associated infrastructure		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
	Planning Ref.	20180450		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Freemens Common, Leicester		
	Study Area	3.10 ha		
	Site Coordinates	SK 59041 02579		
	Height OD	82maOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Originator Brief	Leicester City Council		
	Project Originator Design	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Richard Buckley		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Adam Clapton		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	University of Leicester		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	Leicester City Museum Service	Leicester City Museum Service	Leicester City Museum Service
	ID (Acc. No.)	Y.A2.2019	Y.A2.2019	Y.A2.2019
	Contents	None	Photos	Trench sheets, photo records, report
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Freemens Common, Leicester		
	Author	Clapton, A		
	Other bibliographic	ULAS Report No 2019-016		

	details	
	Date	2018
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester

Adam Clapton
ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel: 0116 252 2848
Fax: 0116 252 2614
Email: ac562@le.ac.uk
31/01/2019



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

