



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Attendance and Recording
During Groundworks at 75 Church Gate,
Leicester, LE1 3AN**

NGR: SK 58638 04877

Richard Huxley



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Archaeological Attendance and Recording

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For: GNK Investors and Asset Management

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Summary

An Archaeological Watching Brief was performed at 75 Church Gate, Leicester, LE1 3AN during the excavation of a lift shaft and trench for a wall footing. The area was excavated to a depth of 1.1m and a 0.7m thick layer of loamy sandy silt was found beneath the building. This layer resembled topsoil and it contained modern porcelain fragments (not retained). Beneath this was a mid brownish-yellow sandy silt which was not dug into. No features were found during the work although a fragment of post-medieval pottery dating 1650-1750 was recovered.

The report will be archived under accession number Y.A.12.2019

Cover photo: The lift shaft and wall footing trench before excavation commenced.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for a Watching Brief undertaken at 75 Church Gate Leicester. It details the programme of archaeological work that was undertaken in May 2019 and follows the strategy of work set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (WSI; ULAS 2018).

The work is related to groundworks associated with the change of use of the ground floor of a building. The building is being changed from a restaurant (Class A3) to retail (Class A1) or financial and professional services (Class A2). The Planning Archaeologist at Leicester City Council has requested mitigation in the form of archaeological attendance and recording to ensure that any archaeological remains are investigated and recorded.



Figure 1: Location of the site in Leicester (contains OS data)

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Figure 2: Location of the site on Church Gate (contains OS data).

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Site Description, Topography and Geology

The assessment area lies at approximately 275m north-west of the Clock tower at Leicester city centre and 255m south-east of St. Margarets Church (SK 58638 04877) (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The site lies at a height of around 57m aOD.

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology consists of Branscombe Mudstone Formation - Mudstone.

Historical and Archaeological Background

The development sits just outside the east wall of the Roman and medieval town, on the east side of Church Gate where it is possible that outer ditches of the defences lay. It also lies on the northern side of the Fosse Way Roman road as it runs north-eastwards from the city toward the Roman fortress and city at Lincoln. In the Roman period cemeteries were located outside the walls of towns and along major routes, such as the Fosse Way. In the past, burials have been found along the line of the road, most recently to the rear of Wilkinson's shop, immediately east of the bus station.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicester does not record any archaeological remains within the assessment area itself, but does list many archaeological sites and listed buildings within a 250m radius of the site.

Directly opposite the proposed development site was an archaeological excavation in 1968 which uncovered part of the Roman Town defences (**NMR ID1851382**). At 62-64 Church Gate numerous archaeological investigations have taken place. In 2005 a watching brief and building survey was undertaken at this address which recorded evidence for the timber-framed origins of the building (**NMR ID 1828909**). A historic building record was also carried out (**NMR ID 1892363**) and an evaluation which recorded a well-stratified sequence of deposits to the south-west of the site (**NMR ID 1902814**).

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the archaeological observation, attendance 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 and to advance understanding of the heritage assets.
- To recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the recording was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context.

The initial objectives were derived from *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight et al. 2012)

and *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Cooper 2006).

The following specific research agenda topics were identified as relevant to this study (Cooper 2006):

Modern

9.2.1. Can we establish a typology of modern buildings, particularly of the 20th century, and how does this vary regionally?

9.2.2. How have building types changed (e.g. adaption of industrial buildings to new uses) and what has been the impact of building regulations?

9.1.3. How have settlements expanded beyond their historic cores (e.g. suburban growth, peripheral housing estates and industrial parks)?

Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2014). A lift shaft was excavated within the building and a trench for a wall footing. The archaeologist monitored the groundworks and inspected the trenches recording deposits where appropriate.

An accession number/site code was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts. The project involved the observation of groundworks by an experienced professional archaeologist. Excavation was carried out with a machine appropriate for the work fitted with a flat-bladed bucket to expose the underlying strata. The machine did not track over any surfaces until the archaeologist has inspected and cleared the area. Any archaeological deposits revealed were investigated and recorded.

The archaeologist co-operated at all times with the contractors on site to ensure the minimum interruption to the work. Any archaeological deposits were hand cleaned and recorded as appropriate. Samples of any archaeological deposits located were hand excavated recovering artefactual evidence.

The CIfA *Guidelines for Finds Work* was adhered to (Standards and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological materials (2008). All identified finds and artefacts were retained, although certain classes of building material was, in some circumstances, discarded after recording.

A photographic record of the investigations was prepared which included photographs illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

Results

The lift shaft and wall footing were positioned against the southern edge of the building close to the south-eastern corner (see Figure 3). The lift shaft measured 2.4m long by 2.3m wide but was extended by an extra 0.2m following a building inspection. The lift shaft was excavated to a depth of 1.1m below the current concrete floor. The modern concrete measured 0.2m thick and was found to be overlaying a 0.2m thick layer of hard-core composed of modern building

rubble. The edge of a drain was found in the south-western corner of the lift shaft and a concrete block measuring 0.66m² by more than 0.7m deep was found against the southern wall of the building (see Figure 4).

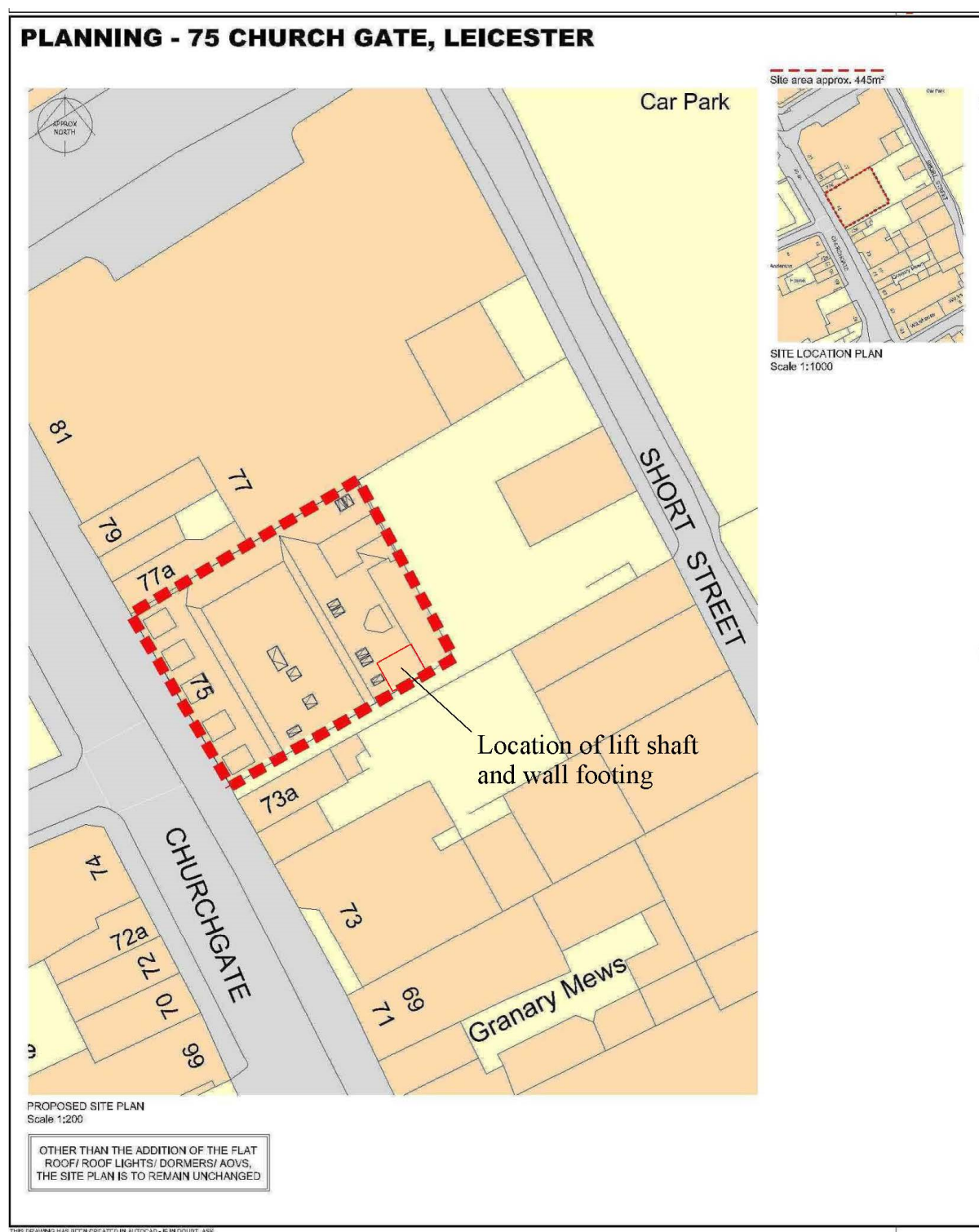


Figure 3: Location of the lift shaft and wall footing within 75 Church Gate (Adapted from client).

Beneath the modern concrete and hard-core was a 0.7m thick layer of loamy sandy silt that was coloured dark blackish-grey. This deposit resembled a topsoil and contained small stones with

fragments of modern porcelain which were not retained. This layer was overlaying a mid-brownish-yellow coloured sandy silt which contained a few small rounded pebbles. This deposit was not dug into and it is unclear whether it represents the archaeological horizon.



Figure 4: Deposits encountered in the lift shaft area showing the concrete block against the building wall.

Next to the lift shaft a 4.5m long by 0.5m wide trench orientated east to west was dug for the construction of a wall. The eastern end turned to the south and joined to the north-eastern corner of the lift shaft (see Figure 5). The trench was also dug to a depth of 1.1m and an electrical cable was found in the western end. Beneath the modern layers the same dark blackish-grey coloured loamy sandy silt found in the lift shaft continued throughout the trench. No features were identified in either the trench or the lift shaft area although the rim of a glazed hollow ware vessel dating to 1650-1750 (D. Sawday pers. comm.) was recovered during the groundwork.



Figure 5: The excavated lift shaft and trench for the wall footing.

Discussion and Conclusions

The work performed at 75 Church Gate found no archaeological features during the groundworks. Beneath the modern building a 0.7m-thick layer of loamy sandy silt was found which appeared to represent topsoil. Modern pottery was found in this layer and the unstratified post-medieval pottery is likely to have originated from it. The site is located to the east of the Roman and medieval town and the thick topsoil layer may have accumulated throughout the post-medieval and modern periods. It is not known whether the layer of sandy silt found beneath it represents an archaeological horizon.

Archive

The site archive consists of:

- X1 Watching Brief recording sheets.
- X21 Digital photographs.

The archive will be held by Leicester Museum Service under the accession number YA.12.2019.

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.

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

Acknowledgments

ULAS would like to extend its thanks to GNK Investors and Asset Management.

The fieldwork was carried out by Richard Huxley and managed for ULAS by Richard Buckley and John Thomas.

Bibliography and Sources

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Oasis Information

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-357583		
	Project Name	An Archaeological Attendance and Recording During Groundworks at 75 Church Gate, Leicester, LE1 3AN		
	Start/end dates of field work	17-05-2019 to 17-05-2019		
	Previous/Future Work	No/ No		
	Project Type	Watching Brief		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Other 2 - In use as a building		
	Monument Type/Period	Layer-Modern Layer-Post-medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery-Post Medieval Pottery-Modern		
	Development Type	Watching Brief		
	Reason for Investigation	Planning condition		
	Position in the Planning Process			
	Planning Ref.	20170100		
	PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	LE1 3AN	
Study Area				
Site Coordinates		SK 58638 04877		
Height OD		57m OD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	University of Leicester		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Richard Buckley and John Thomas		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Richard Huxley		
Sponsor/Funding Body	Developer			
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	LCMS	LCMS	LCMS
	ID (Acc. No.)	YA.12.2019	YA.12.2019	YA.12.2019
	Contents	Ceramics',	'Images raster digital photography'	'Notebook – Excavation, Research, General Notes', 'Unpublished Text'
	Type	Grey literature		

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