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**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
on land adjacent to 32 Stockerston Road,  
Uppingham, Rutland. NGR: SP863 997**

**Summary**

*A watching brief was undertaken for Uppingham School by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 8th and 9th of December 2005. The purpose of the work was to observe the site strip and ground preparation in advance of proposed development of a new theatre extension for Uppingham School, planning application: FUL/2002/0289/CC. The site is situated within the historic settlement core of Uppingham and within an area of archaeological potential. Because of this the works were seen as being likely to uncover and disturb any surviving archaeological deposits and features.*

*The overall site strip removed an area of tarmac and approximately 0.3m of turf, topsoil and subsoil to reveal an orange brown silty clay natural substrate. Areas of disturbance included a modern rubbish tip, a garden pond and the foundations for a series of demolished buildings along the east side of the site adjacent to the theatre.*

*One small flint bladelet was found within the rubbish tip fill otherwise no archaeological deposits or features were observed.*

*Records will be deposited with Rutland County Council, Accession number RT02.2006*

**1. Introduction**

The town of Uppingham, Rutland lies approximately 25km east of Leicester and 9km south of Oakham (fig.1). The site is situated on the north side of Stockerston Road on the western edges of Uppingham NGR SP863 997 (fig.2). It lies to the rear of No. 32 on what was recently a garden with a small tarmac car park and is adjacent to the Uppingham School theatre. Small outhouse structures associated with the theatre building ran along the eastern edge of the site but these had been demolished some time before the current development work commenced. The buildings are still shown on the latest available map (fig.3).

The proposed development work is for the erection of a drama studio, workshop, classrooms, foyer, toilets and disabled access into the existing theatre. The initial groundworks involved the removal of topsoil and subsoil across the whole of the development area in preparation for later groundworks and construction.

In view of the potential for uncovering archaeological deposits it was necessary that there should be archaeological attendance during the work to ensure that any affected deposits were recognised and adequately recorded.

## 2. Background

Uppingham is located in the old Hundred of Martinsley, which takes its name from a piece of land in the parish of Martinsthorpe. At the time of Domesday, Martinsley Hundred comprised only the Manors of Oakham, Ridlington and Hambleton. The Manor of Uppingham does not appear in the Domesday book but can be identified with one of the 7 berewicks, dependent on the Manor of Ridlington, which was owned by the king (VCH 1935, 96). Uppingham was presumably granted to Henry de Newburgh, Earl of Warwick, by William the Conqueror at the same time as nearby Preston. The Manor was passed to the De Montforts at an early date and in 1281 Edward I granted a weekly market and a 3-day fair at the feast of St. Margaret the Virgin (ibid. 99). In 1367 Preston and Uppingham Manors reverted to the overlord, Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and in 1488 Anne, Countess of Warwick surrendered Uppingham to Henry VII. It remained in the Crown until 1550, and from then onwards the Manor passed through several families until it was finally sold to the Earl of Gainsborough in 1747 (ibid. 97). The place name Uppingham means “homestead or village of the hill-dwellers” (Mills 2003).

Although not situated within the core of the town, the development site is within the historic settlement core and within the area of strip development along the main routes leaving the town (plate 1). Because of this it was considered that the works would be likely to expose any surviving medieval or post medieval archaeology.

Prior to redevelopment the site had been used as a lawned garden with occasional shrubs around the southern and western perimeter. A thin layer of tarmac had been laid over the north eastern side of the site acting as a car park. Garages and theatre workshop buildings ran along the eastern edge of the site as far south as the corner of Number 32, which is to have some of its rear buildings modified. The garage and workshops had been demolished before the archaeological work took place.

## 3. Archaeological Objectives

The objectives of the watching brief were:

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

## 4. Methodology

The topsoil, subsoil and tarmac strip covering the entire footprint (fig. 3) of the proposed building and a small area of driveway to the south used a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All topsoil, made ground and subsoil was removed in spits and removed from site in order to create a level plot in preparation for the proposed building. After inspection for any archaeological

features or deposits, the area was then covered in stone and rubble waste to allow easy access for site vehicles.

All deposits were recorded by notes and sketches using the standard ULAS pro-forma watching brief form. Colour photographs were also 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*.

## 5. Results

Part of the lawn area and some of the tarmac surface had already been removed prior to the first site visit. The topsoil consisted of dark grey brown silty loam with abundant small roots throughout whilst the subsoil was slightly lighter in colour with less roots and a higher clay content. The tarmac had been laid on a bed of mill waste laid on top of a thin layer of mixed dark grey brown subsoil. The combined depth of topsoil and subsoil was approximately 0.28m at its deepest and covered a natural orange brown slightly silty clay. A small quantity of very late 19th century pottery and plant pot fragments was recovered from both topsoil and subsoil but was not retained.

The subsoil strip revealed the presence of a back-filled garden pond along the centre of the western boundary. The pond cut into the natural substrate but was reasonably modern as a plastic sheet liner was found beneath it. 10.7m from the northern boundary were the remains of four truncated concrete posts with some disturbance around them (plate 3). It is not clear what function these served but the proximity to the demolished outhouses suggests perhaps a base for an oil tank or similar object.

To the north of the concrete posts was a large irregular patch of dark grey clay silt approximately 3m in diameter. Initial excavation showed this to have very poorly defined edges and of variable depth across the feature. A small flint bladelet was recovered from the surface of this but further excavation uncovered an aluminium drinks can, assorted pieces of plastic and some very modern pottery all buried up to 0.2m below the surface. As this was obviously a modern feature no further excavation took place and only the blade was retained.

1.4m from the north eastern corner of the existing building a large brick lined well was uncovered. Initial measurement indicated that this was at least 3.1m deep and used 19th or early 20th century bricks to form the sides and the conical top. Although it appeared that the bricks continued down to the water level (approximately 2m below ground level) it was not possible to discover whether this was a 19th century re-use of an earlier well. Pipes were noted running from Number 32 into the top of the well which was then covered over for safety reasons.

The foundations of the outhouse buildings which had recently been demolished appeared to be relatively shallow with fairly poor quality brickwork. The size of the bricks were of 19th or 20th century date. The foundation outline corresponds with the outline shown on the map in figure 3 and continues from the north eastern

corner of the site southwards towards Number 32. As the buildings pass between Number 32 and the theatre the ground has been extremely disturbed by the presence of service pipes and sewers which have effectively destroyed any archaeological features that may have survived here.

## **6. Discussion**

Despite the high potential no archaeological deposits or features were encountered during the watching brief. The discovery of the flint blade indicates the presence of probable prehistoric activity in the locality although the fact that it was recovered from a modern rubbish dump prevents any further interpretation. All other finds date from the 19th and 20th centuries and are consistent with the present house situated on this plot.

## **7. Archive**

The archive consists of site notes, sketches and photographs to be held either by Rutland County Museum or Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team under accession number RT02.2006

## **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.

## **9. Acknowledgements**

The watching brief fieldwork was undertaken by A R Hyam. The project was managed by R Buckley.

Andrew Hyam

January 2006

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## Appendix 1. Figures and Plates



*Figure 1: Location Plan*

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Fig. 2: Area of proposed development within Uppingham..  
Source: Multimaps



Figure 3: Development area.  
Source: Multimaps





*Plate 1. Development site viewed from Stockerston Road.  
No. 32 on left, theatre building on right, small outhouse to be removed.*



*Plate 2. Site viewed from northwest. Topsoil partially removed.  
Location of demolished outbuildings shown by whitewash on theatre walls.*



*Plate 3. Truncated concrete posts and associated disturbance.  
Some tarmac surface still to be removed.*

## **Appendix 2. Site visits.**

### Site visits

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Duration</b>
8.12.05	Site strip	Full day
9.12.05	Site strip	Full day