

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
At Cathedral Road, Derby
(SK 3491 3656)**

Leon Hunt and Tony Gnanaratnam

**For: Cedar House Investments.
Planning Reference: DER/11/03/01992/PRI**

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Leon Hunt

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Cathedral Road, Derby. The site lies on the edge of medieval Derby and possibly within the Anglo-Saxon settlement area. The site, therefore, has a high archaeological potential. The watching brief revealed features containing medieval and post- medieval pottery. The archive will be deposited with Derby Museums and Art Gallery under the Accession Number DBYMU 2004-72.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by Cedar House Investments to carry out a watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a Sixth Form Education Centre, and residential and office accommodation (Planning application number DER/11/03/01992/PRI) at Cathedral Road, Derby.

The Derby Development Control Archaeologist had recommended a programme of archaeological work in accordance with DoE Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (Archaeology and Planning).

A desk-based assessment of the archaeological impact of the development was prepared for the site (Gnanaratnam 2003). This outlined the high archaeological potential of the site due to its location within a known medieval settlement.

A Brief was then issued by the Development Control Archaeologist outlining the need for an intrusive archaeological evaluation. This required that a 6% sample of the site should be evaluated by trial trench.

A Design Specification was prepared by ULAS on behalf of the client and approved by the Development Control Archaeologist. This took into consideration the complex constraints of the site including the fact that the Health Centre to the south of the site would remain in use, and that Cathedral Road itself bisected the site. Despite these constraints 5.25% of the total area of the site was evaluated by trial trenching.

After the issuing of the evaluation report (Harvey 2004) and following consultation with ULAS, the Client and Derby City Council Development Archaeologist a mitigation strategy was formulated which asked for a watching brief to be carried out during the initial groundworks at the Cathedral Road site.

Site Location and Geology

The development site is located close to Derby city centre on the southern side of St. Alkmund's Way (A52) at the junction of St. Alkmund's Way and Cathedral Road. The site is bounded on the western side by Willow Row and by Walker Lane to the south. The total site area is 0.444ha and lies at a height of c.49m OD.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey map 125 (1:50 000 Solid and Drift) indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of alluvial deposits.

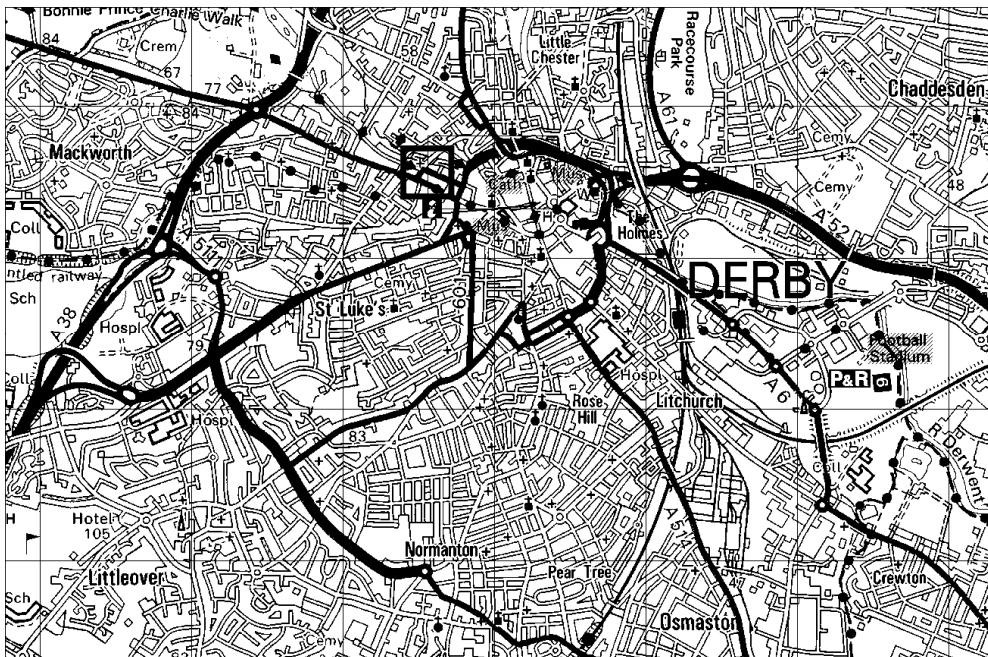


Figure 1: Site Location Scale 1: 50000

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Archaeological Background

The following is derived from the archaeological evaluation report of the site (Harvey, 2004):

There is no recorded prehistoric activity within the development area and Roman activity is concentrated 1km to the north of the site. The nature of settlement in the Anglo-Saxon period remains unclear. Although the name 'Derby' derives from Old Scandinavian diurbý, for village or homestead, and the town was one of the five boroughs of the Danelaw in the 10th century, little archaeological evidence of this period has come to light, with the exception of the remains of a pre-conquest church

revealed by the excavation of St Alkmund's church in the late 1960s (Barrett 2001). It has been suggested that the original notion that the settlement was concentrated at the junction of Markeaton and Bramble Brook is too simple and current theories suggest the site may well lie within the Saxon settlement.

The development area lies to the north-west corner of the medieval town. John Speed's 1610 map shows a typical pattern of settlement for the outskirts of a medieval town with buildings fronting Walker Lane and Willow Row and yards, gardens or orchards to the rear.

Excavations carried out recently by Archaeological Investigations Ltd on the other side of Walker Lane, directly adjacent to the development site, have revealed late pre-Norman Conquest levels, with medieval floor levels towards Markeaton Brook as well as ditches and a bank associated with the brook. Backyard activities in the form of a kiln or oven as well as a series of clay-lined pits representing industrial activities utilising the brook were observed (Gnanaratnam 2003).

The site of St Helens Abbey (SMR 18957 – DR4458) is located 150m north of the development area. A priory was founded here in 1137 and by 1160 it had become a hospital. It is possible the grounds of this complex may have extended into the development area.

The evaluations carried out by ULAS did not suggest the presence of significant archaeological deposits, although small quantities of medieval and post-medieval pottery were discovered including sherds of Cistercian ware and Midland Purple.

Aims and Methods

The purpose of the watching brief was to ascertain whether archaeological deposits were present. If so, the character, extent and date range of any deposits identified would be established, in order to assess their significance (see Appendices, Design Specification). Recording of these deposits would be carried out as appropriate, and an archive and this report produced. The work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, and adhered to the University's Health and Safety policy.

The site was visited by Tony Gnanaratnam on 13th, 14th and 17th May and by Leon Hunt from 17th to the 20th May, during which time the stripping of demolition debris and overburden was monitored and observed and any archaeological features were recorded and surveyed.

Results

At the time of arrival the access ramp for the piling rig had been largely cut down to level and stoned up, so the ground works could not be investigated in this area. However, in the northern end a remnant of ditch (100) was visible, with a depth of more than 0.30m. Fragments of post-medieval pottery were recovered from this. The

rest of the feature was truncated away by a cellar. Cellar activity was also visible in the northern part of the site, and was most likely associated with the recently demolished Clinic.

The lower level of the site was stripped with a ditching bucket under archaeological supervision down to the top of natural, a yellowish silty clay, over gravel. This revealed a ditch (108) running roughly southwest/northeast, this had sides sloping at an angle of around 45° and was in excess of 0.30m deep. Fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from this. Later features heavily disturbed this feature as it headed towards Willow Row.

A second probably linear cut was revealed (109) which contained post-medieval pottery.

Two groups of post-holes were exposed, (102)-(104) and (110)-(113) these ran very roughly parallel to ditch (108) and contained post-medieval pottery. A group of small pits were also uncovered (101) and (105)-(107), which also followed roughly the same alignment.

In the diverted course for the drain, a partly stone-lined probable cellar was uncovered. The stone-work appeared to be a grit stone, rough squared, in substantial blocks 500x250x250mm typical of visible 19th century stonework. The stonework supported Victorian brickwork. In the south of the trench was what appeared to be a brick-built well. The trench was not entered due to health and safety considerations.

During the visit of 17th May another brick well, which appeared to be over 10m deep was uncovered a few metres from the edge of the road. This was undoubtedly fairly modern in origin. During the following few days the work of stripping moved further to the east and south. This process further defined some features discovered earlier, such as the ditch (108), and also part of a pit (200).

The contractors later removed the road (Cathedral Road) and moved west towards Willow Row and the area occupied by Mowlems. This revealed an area dominated by cellars, some of which were quite substantial and contained artefacts such as glass bottles dating back to the early twentieth century. The presence of the cellars meant that no further archaeological features were uncovered in this area.

Conclusion

The archaeological desk based assessment had suggested that Willow Row and Walker Lane in particular were of some archaeological potential for medieval and post medieval properties, based on evidence from the Speed map of 1610 which shows a built-up frontage with yards, gardens or orchards to the rear. During the trial trenching phase it was unfortunately impossible to examine the frontage of Willow Row in detail due to site constraints, although there was very little indication from trenches elsewhere on the site for intensive activity of the medieval period. However, the watching brief revealed evidence for a ditch and post-holes which could represent backyard activity of the medieval period, but no evidence of associated

buildings was uncovered, most likely due to the cellars in the area, which would have obliterated earlier archaeological features.

Archive

The archive will be deposited with Derby City Museums with accession number 2004-72 and consists of the following:

7 watching brief record sheets, including sketch plan

1 set of colour slides

1 set of black and white contact sheets

4 A3 sheets of perma-trace with sections and plans.

Bibliography

Harvey, J., 2004 *An Archaeological Evaluation At Cathedral Road, Derby (SK 3491 3656)* ULAS Report 2004-054

Gnanaratnam A., 2003 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for land on Cathedral Road, Derby*. ULAS Report 2003-064

Acknowledgements

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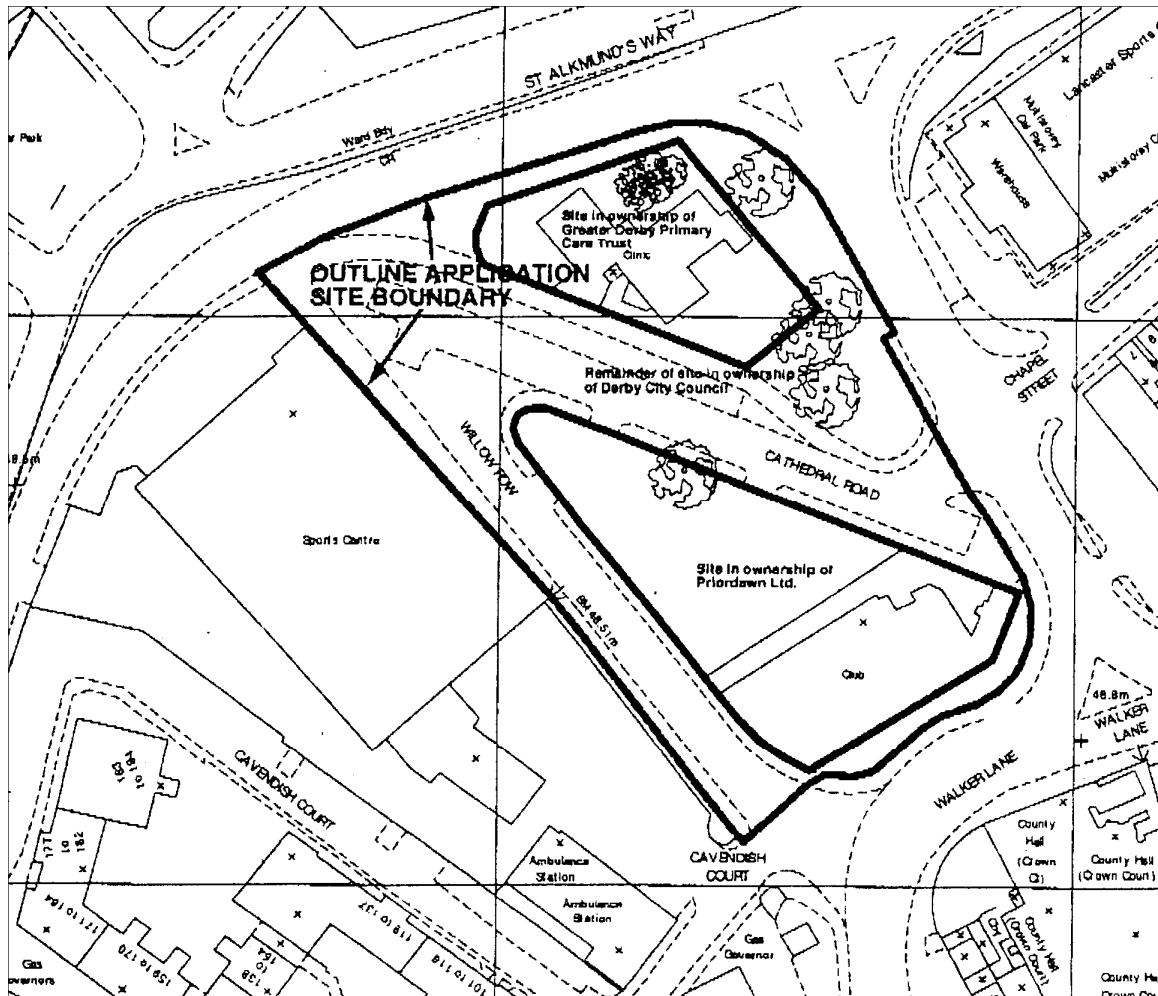


Figure 2: Area of proposed development (Maber Associates). Scale 1:1250

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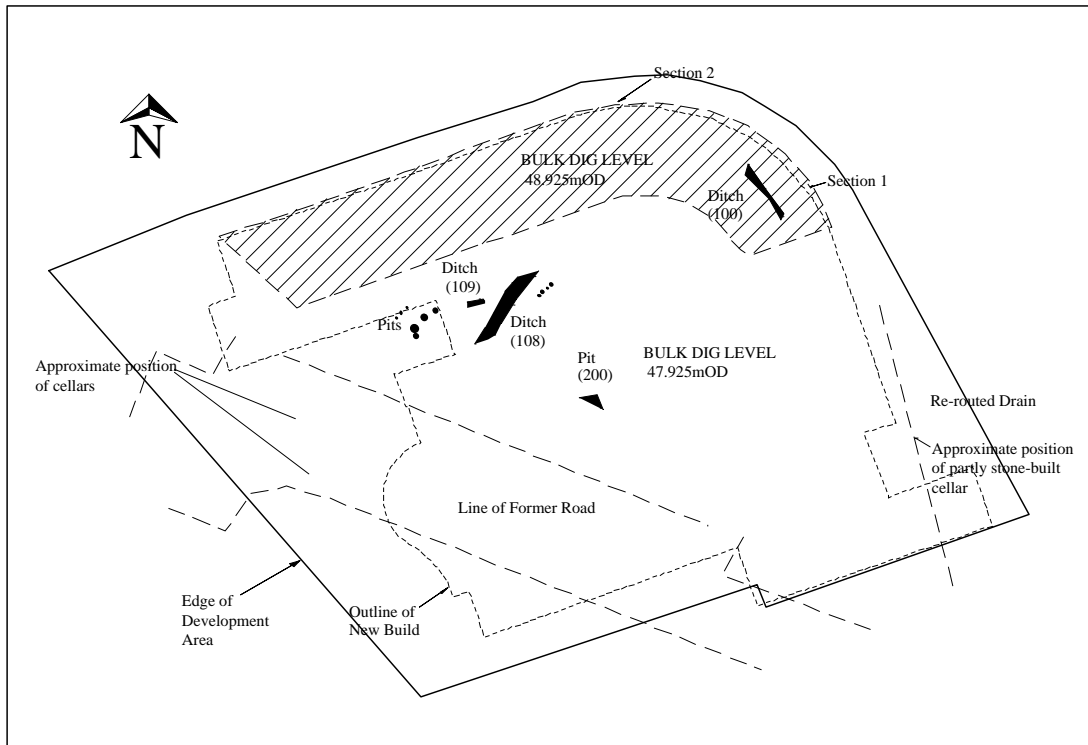


Figure 3: Plan of development area showing features observed during watching brief. Scale 1: 500

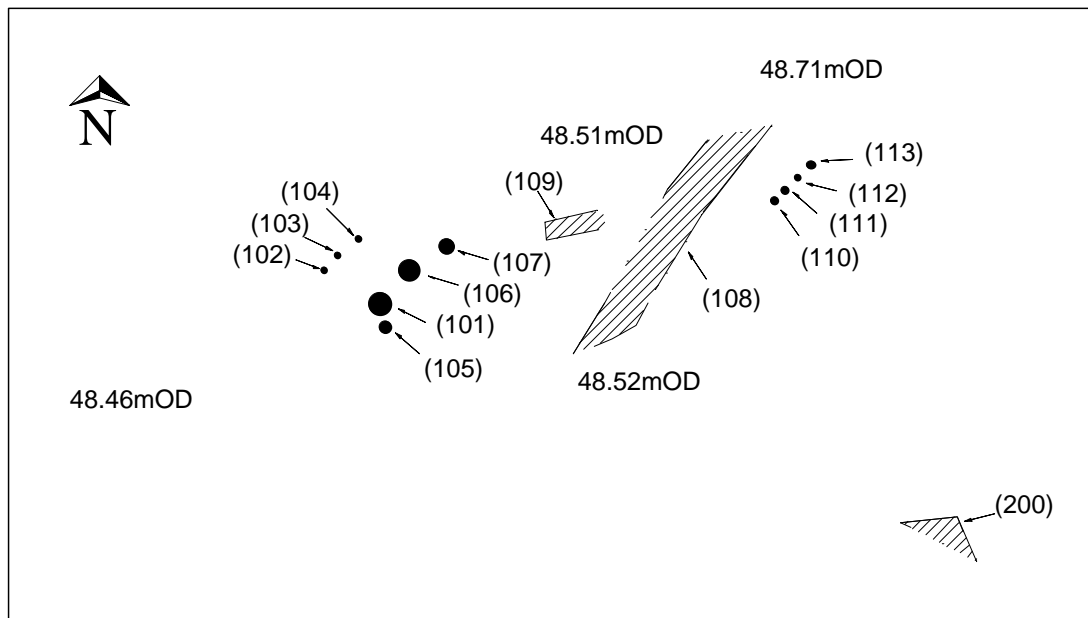


Figure 4: Detail of group of features. Scale 1:200

APPENDIX: The pottery and miscellaneous finds

D. Sawday

The pottery, thirteen sherds, weighing 664 grams, was examined under a binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to comparative material from Derbyshire and elsewhere in the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999), and to previously published descriptions of the medieval pottery from the county, (Coppack 1980), (McCarthy and Brooks 1988). Given these limitations, the identification of the medieval wares thus remains provisional.

Contexts 108, 109 and 111 each contained sherds of medieval pottery thought to date from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. Post medieval pottery occurred in contexts 107 and 113, whilst context 100 produced later medieval and post medieval pottery, and two fragments of probably post medieval flat roofing tile, one with a nib (Allin 1981). A complete moulded Victorian bottle, with a sheared lip, was also recovered from the cellars at the western side of the site.

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- Allin, C.E., 1981. 'The Ridge Tile' in J.E. Mellor and T. Pearce, 52-70.
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Mellor, J.E., and Pearce, T., 1981. *The Austin Friars, Leicester*. London: Counc. Brit. Archaeol. Res. Rep. **35**.
McCarthy, M.R., and Brooks, C.M., 1988. *Medieval Pottery in Britain AD900-1600*. Leicester, Leicester University Press.

Site/Parish: Cathedral Road, Derby. Accession No/ Doc Ref: DBYMU.2004-72 Material: pottery & misc. finds Site Type: edge of historic town core	Submitter: L. Hunt Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Id: 17.80.04 Method of Recovery: Watching brief.
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Context	Fabric/ware	Sherd Nos.	Weight Grams	Comments
POTTERY				
100	Midland Purple	1	3	Later medieval.
100	Midland Yellow ware	1	65	Glazed internally, hollow ware vessel, post medieval.
101	Slipware	1	37	Notched rim with feathered slipware decoration on interior, later 17 th or 18 th C.
108 ditch	Medieval Sandy ware	3	7	Fabric similar to 109 below, medieval.
108	?Pink Sandy ware	3	27	Fine sandy fabric, jug shoulder, yellowish orange glaze, join, medieval.
109	Medieval Sandy ware	1	10	Hard fired relatively fine sandy ware, oxidised interior, reduced grey core & exterior under greenish yellow glaze, medieval.
111	?Orange Sandy ware	1	8	Glazed cooking pot/jar rim, medieval.
113	Blackware	1	7	Fine ware, post medieval.
U/S	Stoneware	1	500	Complete bottle, possibly for ginger beer and designed for a cork stopper. Stamped 'PRICE BRISTOL' and transfer printed 'W. BROWN WOODVILLE' and with a logo inside a circle 'H.B.W'. Victorian.
FLAT ROOF TILE				
100	Earthenware	2	285	One fragment has a crudely made nib, showing that sanded side of the tile hung uppermost.
GLASS				
U/S		1		Complete Victorian moulded glass bottle with a sheared lip.