



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at 2-4  
Peacock Lane/16 New Street, Leicester**

**NGR SK 585 043**

Sofia Picken




**ULAS Report No 2019-087**

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**An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land at 2-4 Peacock Lane/16  
New Street, Leicester  
NGR: SK 585 043**

**Sofia Picken**

**For: Leicester Diocesan Board of Finance**

Checked by
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# **An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land at 2-4 Peacock Lane/16 New Street, Leicester**

**Sofia Picken**

## **Summary**

*University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an intermittent watching brief on land at 16 New Street, Leicester, NGR SK 585 043 in January 2018, during the stripping of, and groundworks associated with the laying of internal drainage. No archaeological deposits were observed with any survival of archaeological remains, particularly of the Greyfriars, likely to be at a deeper level. The site archive will be held by Leicester City Council Museums under accession number Y.A17.2019*

## **1. Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on land at 16 New Street, Leicester SK 585 043 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS), intermittently during January 2018. This was undertaken in order to ensure that any surviving archaeological deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in mitigation of the impact of the stripping, and groundworks associated with the laying of internal drainage.

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12, Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, this document forms the report for an archaeological observation, with an assessment of the potential impact on buried archaeological remains from groundworks associated with the development.

## **2. Site Description, Topography and Geology**

The Watching Brief was undertaken on land located within an internal courtyard at 2-4 Peacock Lane. The land is located within the Greyfriars area of Leicester broadly covering a city block bordered by Friar Lane to the south, Grey Friars to the east, St Martin's to the north and New Street to the west (SK 585 043 centre) and now a designated scheduled monument.



Figure 1: Leicestershire



Figure 2: Leicester

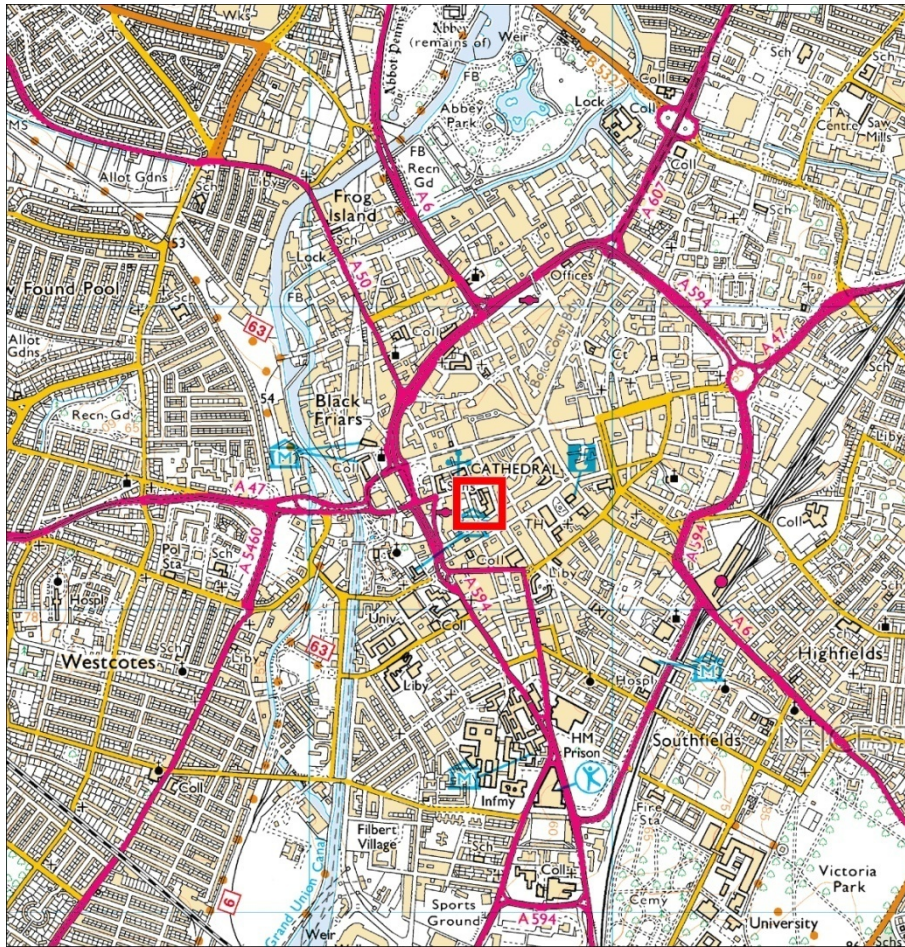


Figure 3: Leicester City Centre

Reproduced from the Leicester 1:25 000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 2005. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495

The land is currently open service courtyard, measuring *c.*1733 square metres and is accessed from inside the property.

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 156 (Leicester), indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of superficial deposits of sand and gravel of the Birstall Member across the southern side of the area overlying bedrock deposits of Triassic clay belonging to the Branscombe Mudstone Formation (BGS 2008). The site lies on relatively flat ground at *c.*65m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

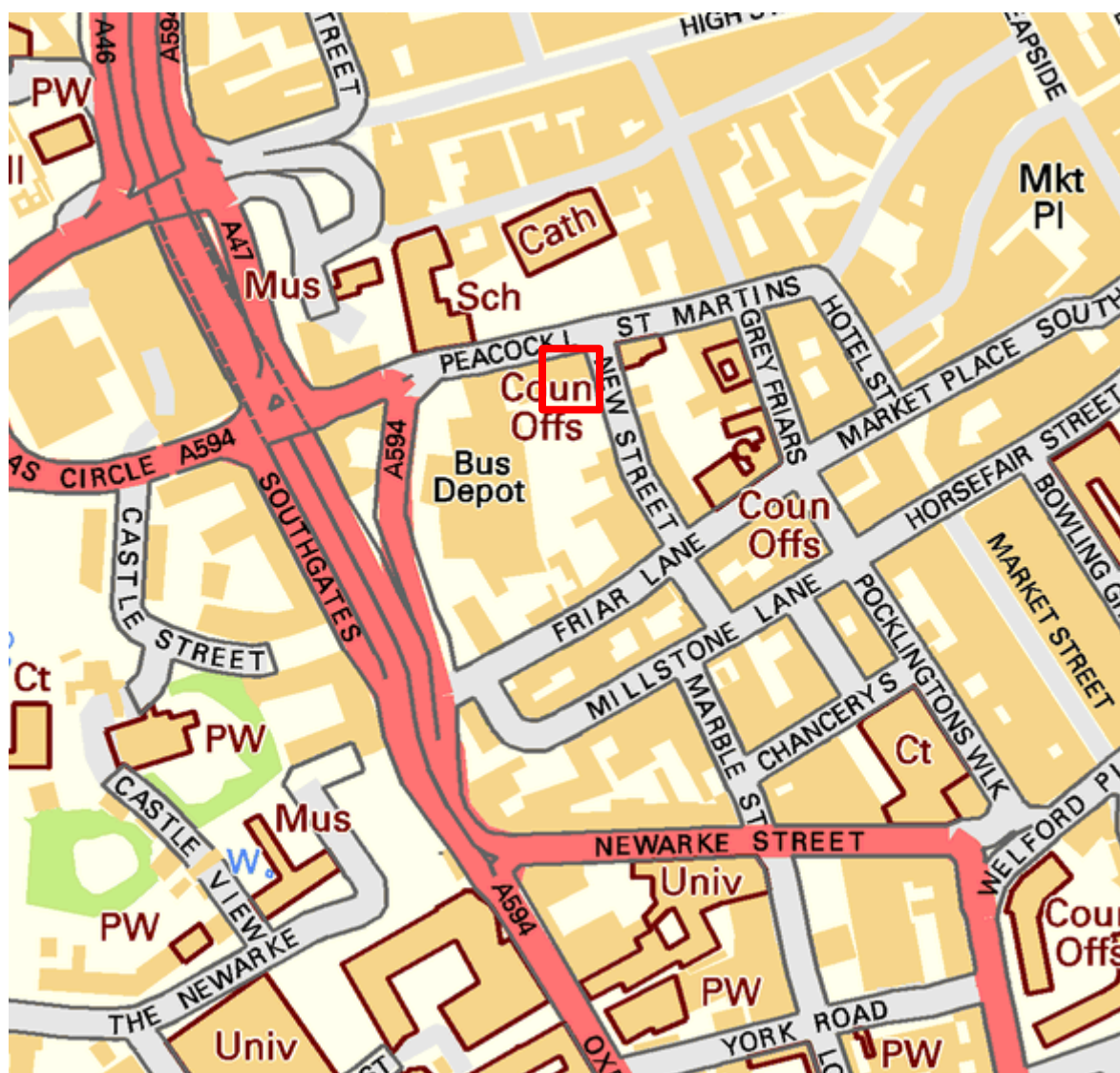


Figure 4: Site Location

### 3. Historical and Archaeological Background

Excavations were undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Greyfriars in 2012 and 2013 and the results are summarised below (Morris 2013)

Little is known about Greyfriars, the medieval Franciscan friary which once stood in Leicester (SK 585 043) but one event stands out in its 300 year history. On 25 August, 1485 King Richard III was buried in the friary church following his defeat by Henry Tudor at the Battle of Bosworth. On Saturday 25 August, 2012 – 527 years after King Richard III was buried, University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) began a historic archaeological project, in collaboration with Leicester City Council and the Richard III Society, with the aim of discovering whether Britain's last Plantagenet King still lay buried in Leicester City Centre. The project represents the first ever search for the lost grave of an anointed King of England.

The friary was founded in the mid-13th century. In 1402 some of the friars were executed for treason, allegedly having spread seditious rumours about the legitimacy of Henry IV's rule. Little else is known, except that the choir of the church was chosen as the burial site for King

Richard III in 1485. Ten years later, Henry Tudor, now King Henry VII, had a tomb erected over the grave. The friary was dissolved by King Henry VIII in 1538 and most of the buildings were demolished soon after. In the early 17th century, the land was bought by Robert Herrick, a former mayor of Leicester, who built a large house and garden on the site. In his garden he erected a memorial pillar inscribed 'here lies the body of Richard III sometime King of England'. As Leicester flourished and expanded during the ensuing centuries, Herrick's land was sub-divided and built on and the precise location of the church and the tomb became lost. Fortunately, a map of Leicester dated 1741 still shows the Greyfriars site. Using historic descriptions of the friary and map regression analysis, a search area was established in the south-east quarter of Leicester's historic medieval town centre. Today much of this is built over but some parts do remain open space, primarily car parking, in which archaeological investigation could be carried out.

A first attempt to find the friary used Ground Penetrating Radar. It was hoped that this would indicate the location of the walls of the church under the ground before digging began. Unfortunately, it proved unsuccessful, the results being too confused by modern subterranean activity across the site. Subsequently, two trenches were opened in the Social Services car park. These were laid out north/south, the reasoning being that a church should be aligned east/west, and therefore digging trenches at right-angles across it should provide the best opportunity to encounter some of its walls.

Medieval archaeology was found over a metre below the ground. In the southern half of Trench 1 was an east/west building containing the remains of a tiled floor and stone benches built up against its walls. This building continued into Trench 2, where it joined a long north/south corridor or building running the length of the trench. Its floor had also been tiled (now missing), but their impressions were still preserved on the underlying mortar. Although parts of the friary had been found in these first two trenches, there was little evidence for the church where King Richard III was reputedly buried so a third trench was opened to the north-east of the first two. In this trench (Trench 3) were the remains of a large east/west building (about 10m wide). This had been floored with decorated tiles and contained the remains of choir stalls and demolished tombs. The building and the corridor found in the first two trenches are most likely the friary's chapter house and part of the eastern cloister walk or east range, whilst in Trench 3 is the eastern end of the friary church, including part of the choir and presbytery. This means that the rest of the choir can be projected west into Trench 1, where modern buildings had destroyed evidence of the building.

The friary was mostly built of grey sandstone, with slate roofs decorated with glazed ridge tiles. Inside, the walls were plastered and the floors tiled. These were mostly monochrome, except in the church where many were inlaid. Some of the windows were glazed. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries the friary was stripped of everything of value and left as a ruin before eventually being demolished. Evidence of the people who lived in the friary was sparse, but pottery dating from the 13th to the 16th century was found, along with a couple of medieval silver halfpennies, including one of Richard III's older brother Edward IV. Some brass letters were found in the church, most likely from tomb inscriptions.

The grave identified as that of King Richard III's was located at the west end of the choir, most likely against the southern choir stall. The grave appears to have been hastily dug and was too short for the body, which had been partially propped up at one end. No evidence for a coffin, shroud or clothing was found. This fits with historical accounts, which say that Richard III was buried without pomp or solemn funeral. In particular, the disposition of the arms is



unusual, raising the possibility that the hands could have been tied. The skeleton was in good condition apart from the feet which are missing, almost certainly as a result of later disturbance. Radiocarbon dating provides a date of death of AD 1456-1530, consistent with someone who died in 1485. The individual is male, in his late 20s to late 30s, compatible with Richard's age of 32 at death, with a gracile build. He had severe idiopathic adolescent onset scoliosis. Unaffected by scoliosis, he would have stood around 5ft 8in (1.73m) tall, above average height for a medieval man, though his apparent height might have decreased as he grew older and his disability may have lifted his right shoulder higher than his left. This is consistent with the few contemporary reports of Richard III's physical appearance. Initial analysis of the mitochondrial DNA has revealed a match between the skeleton and two direct descendants of Richard III's sister Anne of York through the female line. The man had ten wounds to his skeleton, consistent with injuries received in battle. These include a puncture wound to the top of the head, most likely caused by a dagger, and evidence that the back of the head had been cleaved open by a sharp bladed instrument, probably a halberd and a sword. The latter wounds would have been fatal. Other minor injuries include a nick to the jaw and one of his ribs, and damage to his right cheek. There is also evidence that his corpse may have been deliberately humiliated after the battle, with a sword or dagger thrust through the right buttock. Like any modern forensic case, the evidence must be assessed together. Combined it makes a strong and compelling case that the skeleton is indeed the remains of King Richard III, the last Plantagenet King of England.

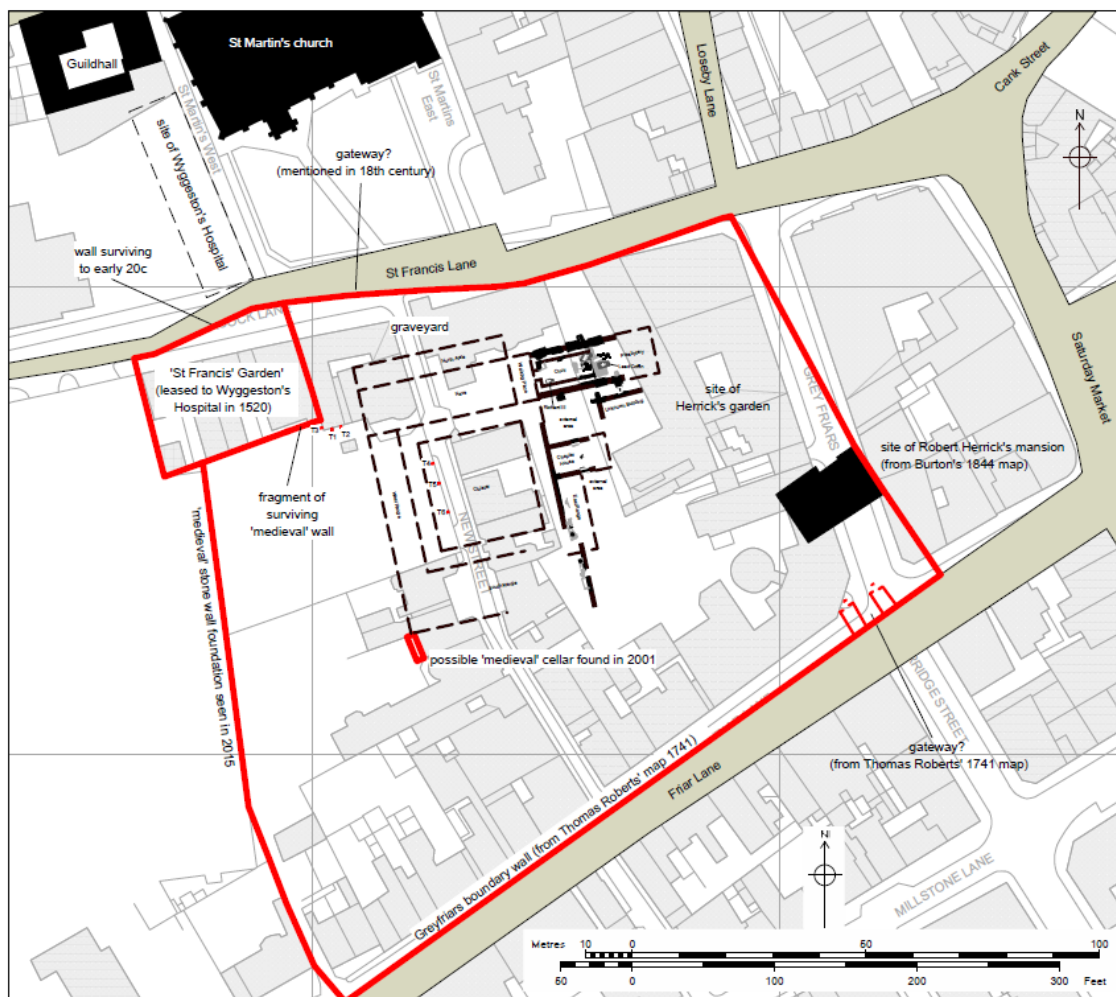


Figure 5: Postulated position of various Greyfriars structures, boundary walls and Herrick's Mansion

#### 4. Aims and Objectives

##### *General*

The main objectives of the archaeological work are:

- 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 aims, the principal objective of the recording is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context.

### ***Research Objectives***

At the outset of the project, local and regional academic research objectives were identified from the East Midlands Research Framework (Cooper ed. 2006) and strategy (Knight et al. 2012), and also considered in relation to national research aims. Research aims would be reviewed and updated as the work progressed and new information came to light.

It was considered that the following research objectives had the potential to be addressed by the project

#### *Early Medieval*

1. Ritual and Belief: What was the relationship between pagan temples and other contemporary or later sites? (Knight 2012 para 6.2.5, 82)
2. How can we further enhance further our understanding of the development of pre-Viking churches, cathedrals and monasteries? (Knight 2012 para 6.2.6, 82)

#### *High Medieval*

3. Religion: Can we identify additional pre-Conquest church, minster and monastic sites? (Knight 2012 para 7.5.1, 94)
4. How can we refine our understanding of local and regional architectural styles, including sculptured stone work, decorations and monuments? (Knight 2012 para 7.5.5, 94)

Specifically, the project has the potential to furnish information on early phases of St Martin's church, including structural features, floor deposits and burials.

## **5. Methodology**

An archaeological presence was maintained whilst ground workers undertook internal hand excavations to locate existing drains and excavate trenches for the proposed additional drainage services. This was recorded photographically.

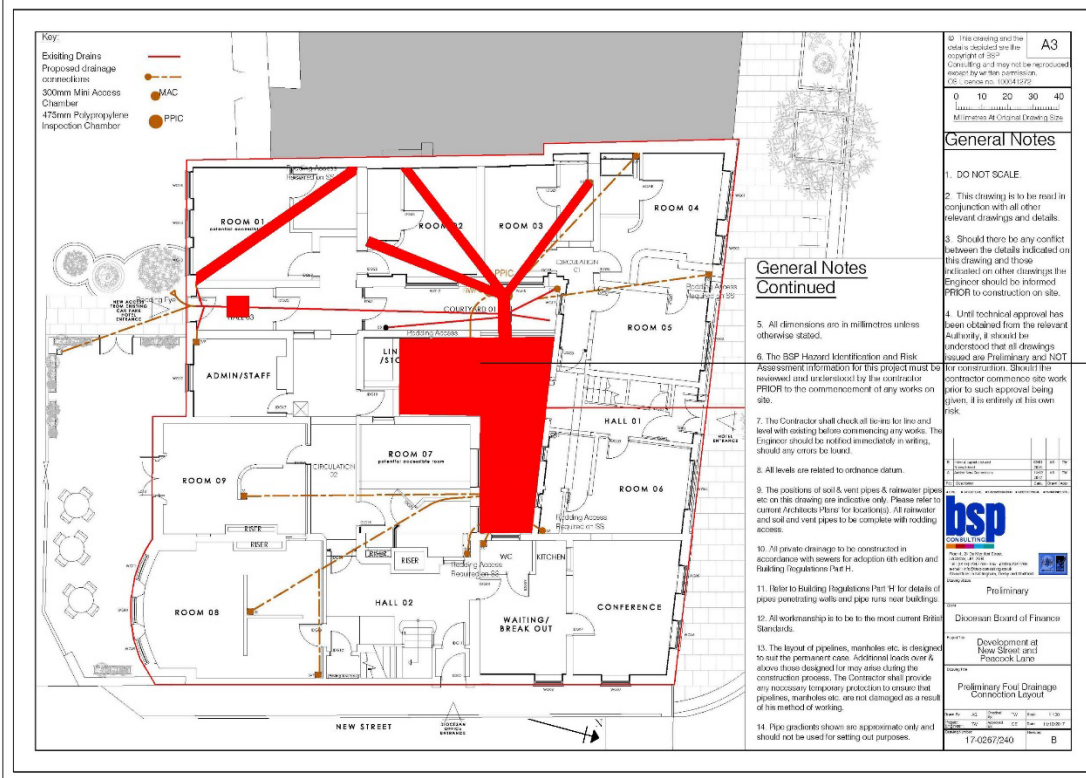


Figure 6: Plan showing area of investigation



Figure 7: Hand excavation of courtyard

The work followed the approved design specification (Buckley 2016) and adhered to the Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (2013).

## 6. Results

The work took place over several weeks during January 2018 and was monitored by an intermittent archaeological presence on site. The work entailed the excavation of modern backfilled materials from existing and new service trenches within the central courtyard of the building and internally. No archaeological deposits were observed during any of the works.



Figure 8: Hand excavation within courtyard



Figure 9: Trench for proposed additional services



Figure 10: Trench for proposed additional services

## 7. Conclusion

No deposits of interest or features, positive or negative, were observed in the development area which was subject to minimal disturbance in order to achieve the desired levels for the laying



of internal draining. Any archaeological remains, particularly those associated with the Greyfriars are likely to be located at deeper levels below the present ground surface and so remain preserved in-situ. Since the fieldwork work was completed in 2017 the area encompassing the site has been designated as a scheduled monument by Historic England.

## **9. Archive**

The site archive will be held by Leicester Museums Service, under Accession No. Y.A17.2019

The archive contains:

- 3 Watching Brief Record Sheets
- Photograph Record Sheet (see the watching brief sheets)
- CD containing digital photographs and report
- Thumbnail print of digital photographs

## OASIS data entry

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1- 416655		
	<b>Project Name</b>	A Watching Brief on Land at 2-4 Peacock Lane/16 New Street, Leicester		
	<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	January 2018		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	No / Not known		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Watching Brief		
	<b>Site Status</b>	Now Scheduled Monument		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Office space		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Development Type</b>	Renovation		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Planning condition		
	<b>Planning Ref.</b>	Not Known		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	2-4 Peacock Lane/16 New Street, Leicester		
	<b>Study Area</b>	c.1733m <sup>2</sup>		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK 585 043		
	<b>Height OD</b>	c.65m OD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Local Planning Authority (LCC)		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Richard Buckley		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Stephen Baker		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Developer / Leicester Diocesan Board of Finance		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	NA	Leicester Museums Service	Leicester Museums Service
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>		Y.A17.2019	Y.A17.2019
	<b>Contents</b>		Photos	Watching brief records Photo records
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
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## 10. Publication

10.1 The report has been added to the Archaeology Data Service's (ADS) Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York.

## 11. Bibliography

- CIfA 2014a, *Code of Conduct*. The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, December 2014.
- CIfA 2014b, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation*. The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, December 2014.
- CIfA 2014c, *Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*. The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, December 2014.
- Knight, D. et al. 2012 *East Midlands Heritage: An updated research agenda and strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands*.

## 11. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken for the Leicester Diocesan Board of Finance and was carried out by Stephen Baker and Cathryn Sheen of ULAS. Richard Buckley managed the project.

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