



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
St. Mary's Church,
Melton Mowbray,
Leicestershire
NGR: SK 75276 19029**



ULAS Report No 2021-140

©2021

Site Name: St. Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire

Grid Ref: SK75276 19029

Author: Andrew Hyam

Client: P.R. Architects (c/o PCC of St. Mary's, Melton Mowbray)

Planning Ref.: 20/00454/FUL

Accession Number: X.A54.2021

ULAS Report Number: 2021-140

| Filename/Version | Checked by | Date | Reason for issue |
|------------------|------------|---------|------------------|
| 2021-140 DRAFT | G. Speed | 1/11/21 | Draft to client |
| | | | |

This Report has been prepared solely for the person/party and project for which it has been commissioned and should not be relied upon or used by any other person/party or for any other project without the written consent of ULAS. No part of this report is to be copied in any way without prior written consent. While every effort has been made to provide detailed and accurate information, however, ULAS cannot be held responsible for errors or inaccuracies contained within this report

University of Leicester, Archaeological Services,
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848
www.le.ac.uk/ulas

© ULAS 2021

OASIS Information

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|----------------|--------------|
| PROJECT DETAILS | Oasis No | universi1-502575 | | |
| | Project Name | An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. | | |
| | Start/end dates | 13-09-2021 to 15-09-2021 | | |
| | Previous/Future Work | Test pitting in 2018. Not known future work | | |
| | Project Type | Archaeological watching brief | | |
| | Site Status | Grade I listed church | | |
| | Current Land Use | Church yard | | |
| | Monument Type/Period | None | | |
| | Significant Finds/Period | Post medieval landscaping/up cast material | | |
| | Reason for Investigation | NPPF | | |
| | Position in the Planning Process | Condition | | |
| Planning Ref. | 20/00454/FULH | | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | County | Leicestershire | | |
| | Site Address/Postcode | St. Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1AE | | |
| | Study Area | 20m ² | | |
| | Site Coordinates | SK75276 19029 | | |
| | Height OD | 74m aOD | | |
| PROJECT CREATORS | Organisation | ULAS | | |
| | Project Brief Originator | Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) | | |
| | Project Design Originator | ULAS | | |
| | Project Manager | Gavin Speed | | |
| | Project Director/Supervisor | Andrew Hyam | | |
| | Sponsor/Funding Body | P.R. Architects (c/o PCC of St Mary's Melton Mowbray) | | |
| PROJECT ARCHIVE | | Physical | Digital | Paper |
| | Recipient | LCC | LCC | LCC |
| | ID (Acc. No.) | X.A54.2021 | X.A54.2021 | X.A54.2021 |
| | Contents | None | Photographs | Report |
| PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY | Type | Grey Literature (unpublished) | | |
| | Description | Developer Report A4 pdf | | |
| | Title | An Archaeological Watching Brief at St. Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. | | |
| | Author | Hyam, A | | |
| | Other bibliographic details | ULAS Report No 2021-140 | | |
| | Date | 2021 | | |
| | Publisher/Place | University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester | | |

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Summary | 1 |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Site Geology and Topography | 5 |
| Archaeological and Historical Background | 5 |
| Objectives | 6 |
| Research Objectives..... | 7 |
| Methodology..... | 7 |
| Results..... | 7 |
| The Boreholes | 7 |
| Re-excavation of Test-pits 1 to 3 | 10 |
| Test-Pit 1..... | 10 |
| Test-pit 2 | 10 |
| Test-pit 3 | 10 |
| Conclusion | 13 |
| Archive and Publication..... | 13 |
| Acknowledgements..... | 13 |
| References and Sources | 13 |
| Appendix 1. Digital Photographs taken during the fieldwork | 15 |

FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1 Site Location within UK, county and local | 2 |
| Figure 2 Proposed new building position and layout..... | 3 |
| Figure 3 Test-pit locations and levels from ULAS 2018 work..... | 4 |
| Figure 4 Plan showing proposed borehole locations and re-excavated test-pits | 4 |
| Figure 5 Area of proposed new building | 5 |
| Figure 6 Location of main borehole..... | 8 |
| Figure 7 B2 borehole samples..... | 9 |
| Figure 8 B3 borehole samples..... | 9 |
| Figure 9 Re-excavated Test-pit 1 | 11 |
| Figure 10 Re-excavated Test-pit 2 | 11 |
| Figure 11 Re-excavated Test-pit 3 | 12 |

An archaeological watching brief at St. Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (SK75276 19029)

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at St. Mary's Church Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. The work was commissioned by P.R. Architects on behalf of the PCC of St. Mary's Church from University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in advance of a proposed new building replacing an existing boiler house located in the northern area of the churchyard.

The watching brief entailed the monitoring of three boreholes and the re-excavation of three test-pits dug in 2018.

The boreholes showed a number of mixed layers down to the natural substratum but did not identify any archaeological features or deposits. The re-excavation of the test pits confirmed the results of the 2018 archaeological work in that much of the raised area around the proposed new building is made of upcast material from the present boiler house. The northern boundary of the site is formed by the adjacent building wall and is made of a number of different phases.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered within the area of the proposed new building. The archaeological work took place between the 13th and the 16th of September 2021. The report and archive will be deposited under Accession Number X.A54.2021

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, (MHCLG 2021) this document forms the report for an archaeological watching brief at St. Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (SK75276 19029).

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) have been commissioned by P.R. Architects on behalf of the PCC of St. Mary's Church to carry out the watching brief in advance of a proposed new building close to the northern boundary of the churchyard and on the site of an existing boiler house (Fig. 2).

In order to gain an understanding any potential relationships between the proposed building and the adjacent structures and to investigate any archaeological features or deposits which may be present in the area the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) requested that an archaeological investigation take place. The DAC has granted a faculty for work with the condition that no works should take place until the Parochial Church Council (PCC), after consultation with the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. The building work will be carried out under planning application 20/00454/FULH. This phase of archaeological work follows on from a programme of test-pitting which took place in

2018 in order to assess the depths of any archaeological deposits which may survive within the proposed development area (Hyam 2018).

This programme of work involved the observation of the re-excavation (by hand) of three test pits (Nos.1-3 excavated in 2018), until the level required by the engineers was reached. The work also involved the monitoring of three new deep boreholes within the garden and on the pathway outside the north transept door (Fig. 2).

The results of all of this work will then be used as guidance to create a mitigation strategy for the new building.

The town of Melton Mowbray is located approximately 17 miles from Leicester in the north-east corner of Leicestershire, and is the largest settlement in this part of the county (Fig. 1). The parish church of St Mary's is a Grade I listed building situated in the heart of the town centre. The church lies to the south of the market place and is on the western side of Burton Road. The churchyard is within the Melton Mowbray Conservation Area.

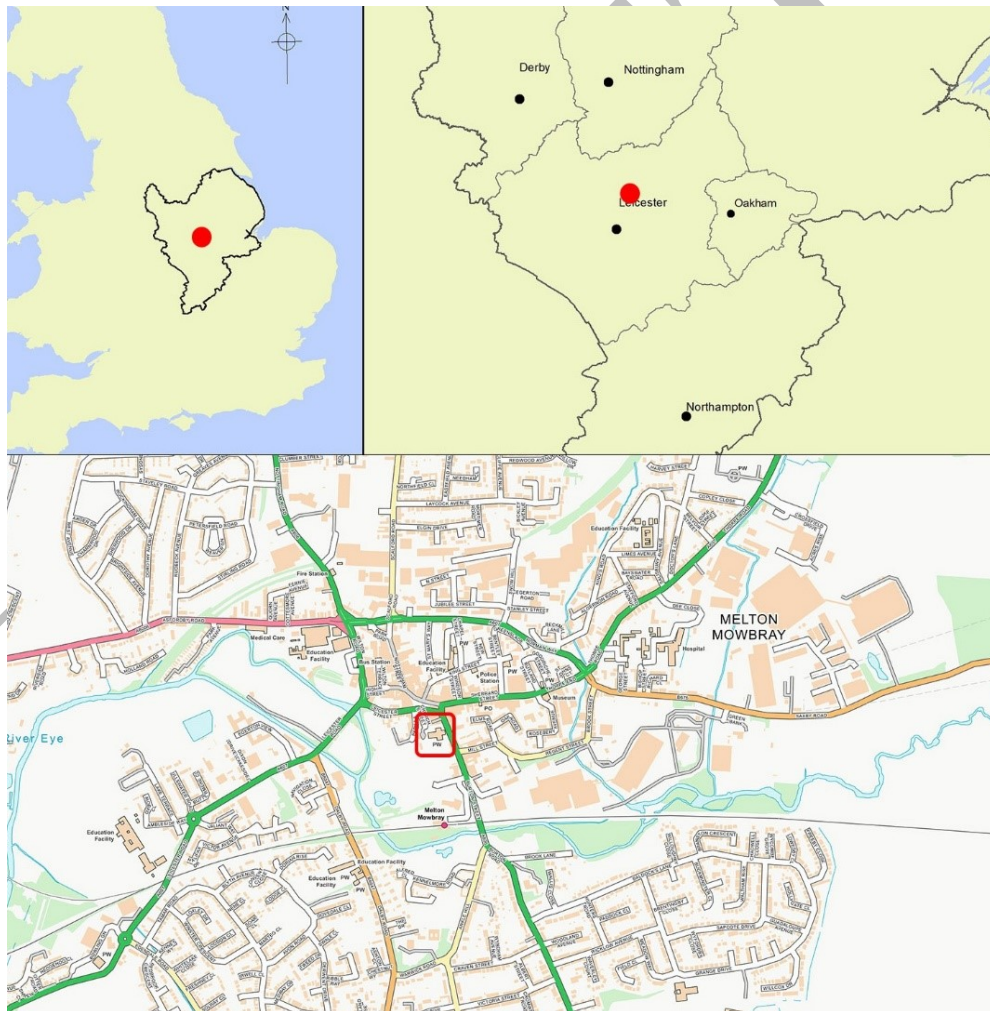


Figure 1 Site Location within UK, county and local
Contains OS data © Crown copyright [and database right] 2021

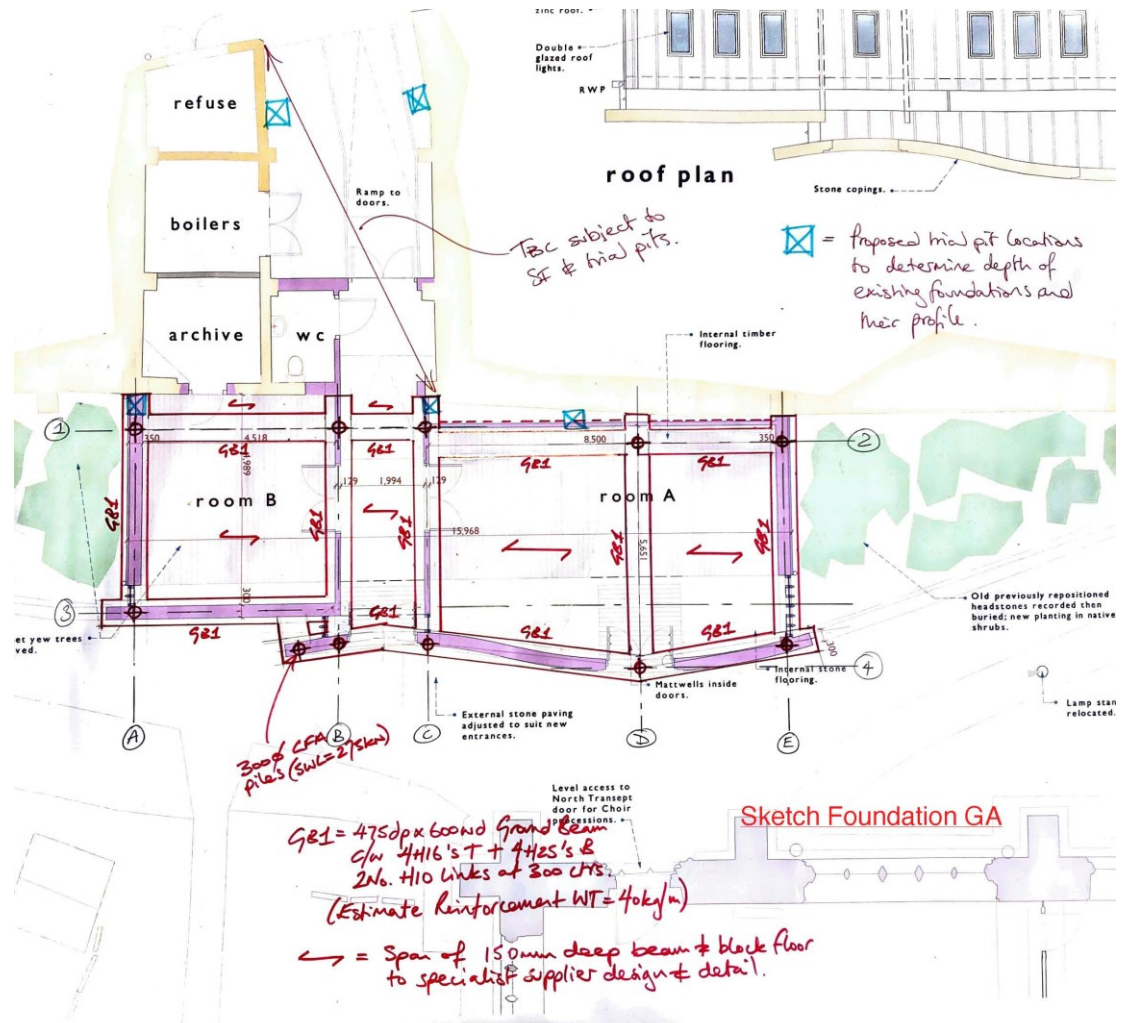


Figure 2 Proposed new building position and layout North to top of plan. Plan provided by client

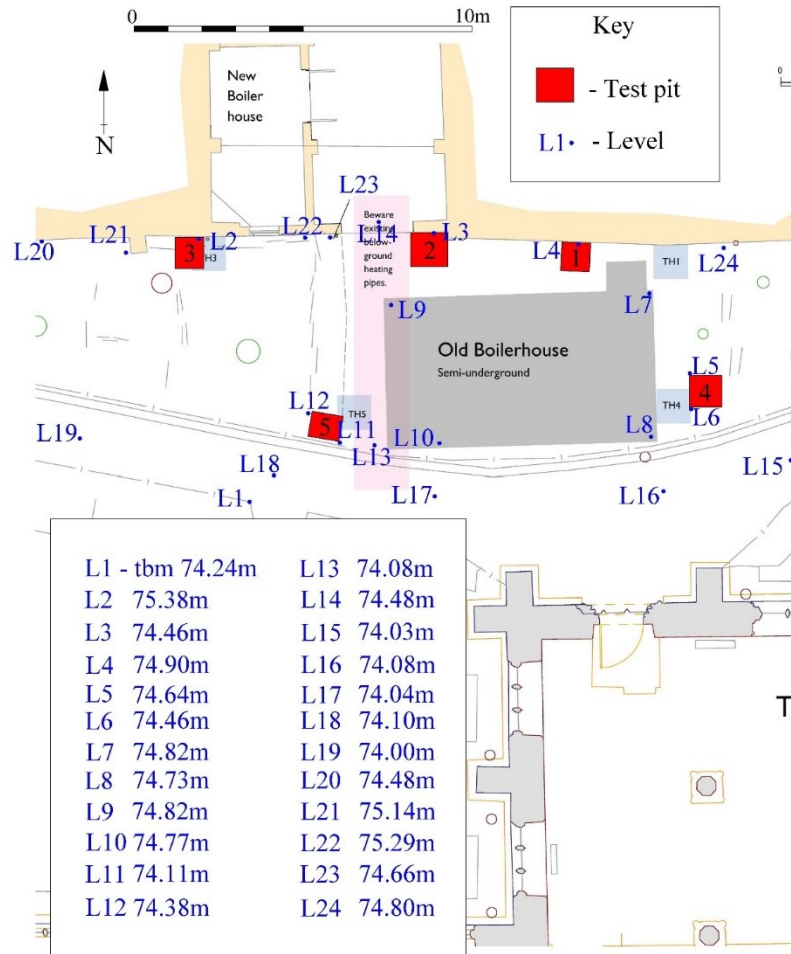


Figure 3 Test-pit locations and levels from ULAS 2018 work
 Test-pits 1, 2 and 3 were re-excavated during this phase

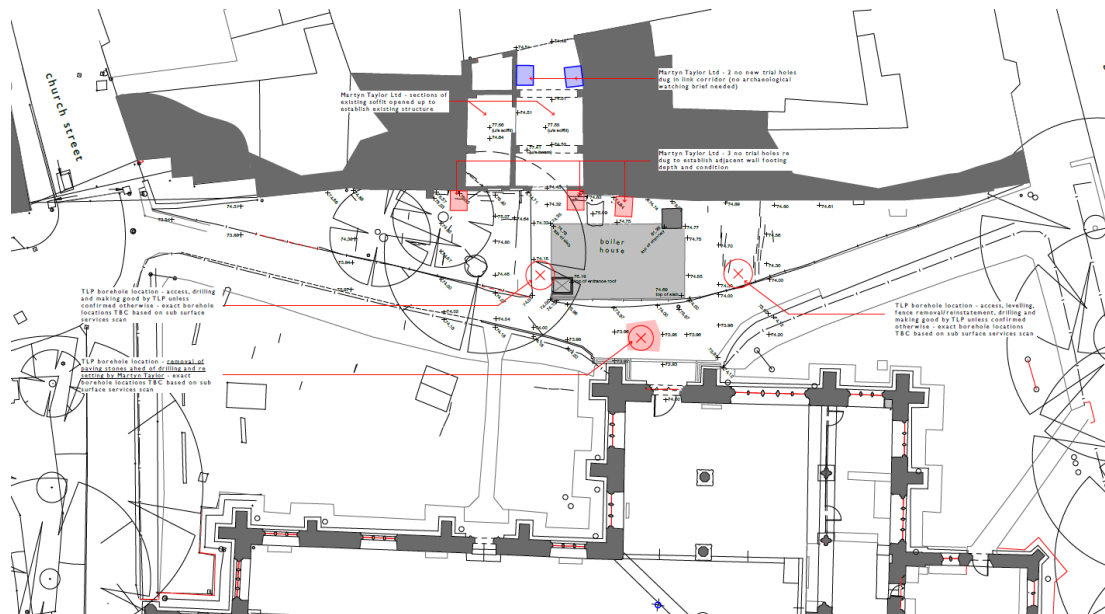


Figure 4 Plan showing proposed borehole locations and re-excavated test-pits
 Boreholes shown by red circles. Plan provided by client

Site Geology and Topography

The northern part of the churchyard lies at a height of approximately 74m aOD and is located on fairly flat ground, dropping away slightly to the south and east. The British Geological Survey for England and Wales indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of superficial Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel overlying Blue Lias Formation Mudstone bedrock.

The site for the proposed new building is on the northern side of the church within an area of the churchyard occupied by a 20th century boiler-house building (Fig. 5). The flat-roofed boiler-house has been partially submerged into the ground leaving the roof less than a metre above current path level. The location is surrounded by mature trees and shrubs covering a long mound of made-ground most probably associated with building spoil from the boiler-house. A number of headstones have been re-set into the mound and are now disassociated from their burials. It is likely that they were moved when the boiler-house was built. The area is bounded in the south by a path leading to Burton Street and to the north by a row of brick-built buildings. The buildings to the north belong to the Samworth Centre and to the Crown Inn public house which faces out onto Burton Street.



Figure 5 Area of proposed new building
Looking north

Archaeological and Historical Background

A desk-based assessment produced by ULAS in 2013 discusses the history and background of the church and of the ongoing improvement works at the time (Clarke 2013). The report noted that church lies on the site of a Saxon minster, and has had an almost continuous series of rebuilds, extensions and modifications ever since. Nothing remains of the earliest church that is generally agreed to have stood on the site of the

present building, which today appears as a large, aisled, cruciform structure of some pretention. The present church is thought to have been founded in 1170 by Roger de Mowbray (c.1120-1188) an English noble and crusader who attained the Lordship of Melton manor, along with other holdings in Normandy and Yorkshire, upon reaching his majority in 1138. In 1220, the church was under the patronage of the prior of Lewes, in Sussex, who may have been responsible for the rebuilding of the early English pointed arches beneath the tower and the raising of the tower itself. From the 13th century onwards, little information regarding the church fabric is given in the bishops' registers, but documentary evidence increases in the 16th century, under the patronage of Sir John Digby of Eye Kettleby, who was responsible for the construction of the clerestory in 1500, and the vestry located on the north side of the chancel in 1532, which is confirmed by a datestone set into the east wall.

A phase of archaeological investigation within the church was undertaken by ULAS in 2014 and then again in 2017. This work took place during an extensive phase of restoration which raised the floor back to its original level following a ground reduction carried out in the 1850s.

Five test-pits were excavated by ULAS in 2018 in order to assess levels and depths of possible archaeological deposits (see Figure 3). The results of the 2018 test pitting programme indicated that much of the area surrounding the boiler-house consists of a mound created by the redeposited spoil from the excavated boiler-house. Rather than removing the spoil it would appear that the spoil was banked-up against the buildings along the northern boundary. The excavation of the boiler-house seemed to have disturbed a number of human bones which were scattered throughout the spoil. The present location of the headstones suggested that the original burials may have been somewhere in this area although headstones are moved around quite often in most churchyards.

The base of an east to west ironstone wall was seen below the present later 19th century brick walls belonging to the Samworth Centre and the Crown in Test-pits 1 and 2. The stone wall clearly represents an earlier structure or line of structures which fronted onto Burton Street which had the same southern property boundary as the present buildings do. A heavily rebuilt and repaired wall was recorded on the north side of Test pit 3.

No structures or clear deposits were seen running out from north to south across the area of the boiler-house.

Objectives

A Written Scheme of Investigation: *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief. Site: St. Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire*, was produced by ULAS which defines the project and details the scope of the project.

The main objectives of the archaeological work were defined as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any

archaeological deposits and features encountered.

- 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.

Research Objectives

The site has the potential to add to research objectives on the Iron Age, Roman, and medieval periods, identified within *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda*, Leicester Archaeology Monograph 13, (ed. Cooper 2006), and *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (ed. Knight et al 2012), and updated here:

<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/researchframeworks/eastmidlands/wiki/>

Methodology

All work will be carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (2020) and adhere to their Code of Conduct (2021). The methodology and recording system employed for the watching brief are discussed in detail in the ULAS WSI. The work involved observing the re-excavation (by hand) of three test pits (numbers.1-3 in the 2018 work – see Fig. 3), until the level required by the engineers was reached. The work also involved a watching brief of three new deep boreholes within the garden area and on the path outside the north transept door (see Fig. 4). The requirement for a watching brief for this project was specified by the DAC Archaeological Advisor. The fieldwork was undertaken on the 13th and 16th of September 2021.

Results

The Boreholes

Three boreholes were placed across the area of the proposed new building to assess ground conditions and the water table level. The main borehole (B1) was placed in the centre of the pathway just to the north of the north transept doorway (Fig. 6). After removing the stone flagstone a 0.25m thick layer of bedding material was removed to expose a dark brown mixed deposit consisting of slightly sand clayish silt with a number of disarticulated fragments of human bone. All human bone was bagged and retained for later re-interment. The disturbed nature of this 0.2m thick layer suggests a mixed layer created in the churchyard following repeated excavation and disturbance of graves over the years. Beneath this layer was a 0.4m thick layer of lighter mid-orange brown silty sand with clay which also appeared to be fairly well disturbed but from which no bone was recovered within the core samples. Beneath this was a very clean natural substratum of mid orange brown silty sand with some gravel and degraded ironstone down to 4.5m below current ground level. With the exception of the human bone in the upper levels no archaeological material was seen in the samples from this bore hole.

Borehole 2 (B2) was originally specified to be placed in the pathway to the west of the existing boiler house. However, as this was also the route of service pipes the borehole was moved to the north-west up to the top of the raised bank to be close to the SE corner of Test-pit 3 (see Fig. 3). The results of this borehole mirrored the findings seen in 2018 in that the entire bank consisted of a disturbed dark brown mixed deposit of slightly sand clayish silt. This deposit continued for nearly 2.5m below the top of the bank before changing to a mid-orange brown silty sand with some clay (Fig. 7). Once again, with the exception of the human bone in the upper levels no archaeological material was seen in the samples from this bore hole.

Borehole 3 (B3) was positioned in the location of Test pit 5. The same sequence of deposits as in the other two boreholes were seen (Fig. 8). No archaeological material was recovered from the core samples.



Figure 6 Location of main borehole
Borehole was placed in centre foreground. Looking west



Figure 7 B2 borehole samples
Samples highlighted by yellow brackets. 0.5m scale. Upper ends of samples to left



Figure 8 B3 borehole samples
Samples highlighted by yellow brackets. 0.5m scale. Upper ends of samples to left

Re-excavation of Test-pits 1 to 3

See Figures 3 and 4 for test-pit locations.

Test-Pit 1

Test-pit 1 was the easternmost pit and was fitted between the north side of the boiler house and the building which forms the north boundary of the site. The 2018 work revealed that the brick wall sat on top of an earlier ironstone wall (Fig. 9). As with the earlier work the surrounding deposits consisted of a heavily disturbed dark brown clay silt layer with a large amount of brick and stone building debris down to around 0.75m below present ground level. Beneath this, and continuing down to the base of the pit, was a layer of dark red-brown silty clay with charcoal flecks.

The ironstone wall (context 114 in 2018) had been laid without mortar using relatively thin pieces of unworked stone which may suggest that it forms the remnant of earlier foundations of a building which followed the same alignment to the present buildings.

This test-pit stopped at 0.9m below current ground level which is only 40mm deeper than the 2018 test-pit maximum depth. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the area of the proposed new building.

Test-pit 2

Test-pit 2 was located to the east side of a gateway leading northwards from the churchyard into the Samworth Centre. The 2018 excavation exposed the base of the Samworth Centre/Crown Inn brick wall showing it to have been patched or repaired in the eastern corner and also to be sitting upon an earlier ironstone foundation wall. This east to west stone wall is very probably the same ironstone wall seen in Test-pit 1. In Test-pit 2 four courses of wall survived beneath brick wall but, where the brick wall stepped outwards only a single course of stone survived. The 0.28m thick four courses of stone were seen to sit on a mixed mid-red brown silty clay deposit.

As with Test pit 1 during re-excavation, the upper layers of overburden contained modern plastic and building waste sitting on a layer of dark red-brown silty clay with charcoal flecks. The same repaired brick wall sitting upon the earlier ironstone wall foundation was observed (Fig. 10).

Re-excavation of this test-pit continued down to the same depth as in 2018. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the area of the proposed new building.

Test-pit 3

This test-pit was located against the northern brick boundary wall at the highest point of the earth mound to the west of the Samworth Centre gateway. The 2018 work indicated that the mound was likely to be made from material created from the spoil from the boiler house. Re-excavation and the borehole work appeared to confirm this. The 2018 work also showed that the northern boundary wall had been heavily patched and repaired and was sitting on a limestone plinth which was just under 0.3m above the church yard path height which suggested that well over a metre of the wall is now hidden beneath the spoil mound.

Re-excavating the test-pit continued down to the limestone plinth (Fig. 11). This pit was then extended by a further 0.1m down the south face of the limestone plinth. This indicated that the wall steps out at this point and continues down for an unknown depth.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the area of the proposed new building.



Figure 9 Re-excavated Test-pit 1
Looking north. 1m scale



Figure 10 Re-excavated Test-pit 2
Looking north-east. 0.5m scale



Figure 11 Re-excavated Test-pit 3
Looking north. 1m scale

Conclusion

The results of the re-excavation of the three test-pits confirmed the 2018 results in that the area around the proposed new building has been heavily disturbed. The most likely cause of this disturbance has probably been caused by the excavation of the present boiler house and the resulting spoil being spread and dumped within the locality rather than being taken off site. No archaeological features or deposits were identified within the test-pits which suggests that this will be the case for the whole of the new building footprint. No earlier wall lines of buildings extending either northwards, from the church, or southwards, from the north boundary, were seen either.

The three boreholes were too small to identify any archaeological features but were useful in identifying depths of underlying layers and the undisturbed natural substratum.

Archive and Publication

The archive for the project will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums Service with accession number X.A54.2021 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (2021-140)
- 1 Photographic record sheet
- 1 DVD of 27 digital photographs
- 1 Contact sheet of digital photos

A summary of this report will appear in due course in the Transactions the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

The University of Leicester Archaeological Services supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. The online OASIS data entry has been completed detailing the results of the project and will be digitally accessible through The Archaeological Data Services (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>).

Acknowledgements

The project was managed by Gavin Speed. The fieldwork was carried out and the report written by Andrew Hyam.

References and Sources

All websites accessed September 2021

British Geological Survey website

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>

Brown, D. 2008, *Standard and Guidance for the Preparation of Archaeological Archives*. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa), 2021, *Code of Conduct*

Cifa (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists), 2020, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

Clarke, S. 2013, *St. Mary's Parish Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment and Statement of Significance*. ULAS unpublished report 2013-144.

Cooper, N.J., (ed.) 2006, *The Archaeology of the East Midlands An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda*. Leicester Archaeology Monograph 13.

Heritage Gateway <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

Hyam, A. 2018, *An Archaeological Investigation by Test pitting at St. Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire*. ULAS unpublished report 2018-153

Knight, D., Vyner, B. and Allen, C. 2012, *East Midlands Heritage: An updated research agenda and strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands*. University of Nottingham and York Archaeological Trust.

LMARS, 2014, *The Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service*.

MHCLG, (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), 2021, *National Planning Policy Framework*.

ULAS. 2021, *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at St. Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire*.

ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel: 0116 252 2848
Fax: 0116 252 2614

September 2021

Appendix 1. Digital Photographs taken during the fieldwork



XA54 2021 (1)



XA54 2021 (2)



XA54 2021 (3)



XA54 2021 (4)



XA54 2021 (5)



XA54 2021 (6)



XA54 2021 (7)



XA54 2021 (8)



XA54 2021 (9)



XA54 2021 (10)



XA54 2021 (11)



XA54 2021 (12)



XA54 2021 (13)



XA54 2021 (14)



XA54 2021 (15)



XA54 2021 (16)



XA54 2021 (17)



XA54 2021 (18)



XA54 2021 (19)



XA54 2021 (20)



XA54 2021 (21)



XA54 2021 (22)



XA54 2021 (23)



XA54 2021 (24)



XA54 2021 (25)



XA54 2021 (26)



XA54 2021 (27)



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
UK

t: +44 (0)116 252 2848

f: +44 (0)116 252 2614

e: ulas@le.ac.uk

DRAFT

