
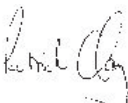


**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
12 Mansion Street, Hinckley, Leicestershire
SP 425 940**

Andrew Hyam

For: DeMontfort Housing Society/ESHA Developments Ltd

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An Archaeological Watching Brief at 12 Mansion Street, Hinckley, Leicestershire (SP 425 940)

Andrew Hyam

Summary

A watching brief was undertaken for De Montfort Housing Society/ESHA Developments Limited by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 6th of February 2008 during the levelling and preparation of ground in advance of 14 flats (planning application 07/00648). The site, covering approximately 0.1ha, lies within the medieval town core of Hinckley with a number of isolated prehistoric and Roman archaeological sites also being noted nearby. In view of this the site was considered to have some potential for surviving archaeological deposits. After the demolition of the 1960s building, with underground car park, only a small area of undisturbed natural orange sand substrate remained along with a brick-lined late 19th or early 20th century well. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this undisturbed area or anywhere within the site.

Records will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council, under Accession Number X.A.39.2008

1. Introduction

In accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning), para.30, this document forms the report for an archaeological watching brief for land at 12 Mansion Street, Hinckley, in the Hinckley and Bosworth district of Leicestershire (SP 426 940). De Montfort Housing propose to erect 14 flats following the demolition of the existing club (Planning application 07/00648).

The town of Hinckley lies approximately 16km south-west of Leicester. The site for the new development, which covers approximately 0.1ha, is at the north-eastern end of Mansion Street (NGR SP 425 940) (figs 1 and 2). It is at a height of approximately 113m OD and follows the general slope of the whole locality down from north to south. The geology of the site is orange-brown sand a band of which, according to the machine driver, runs from north-east to south-west across this part of Hinckley. Until recently the site was occupied by a 1960s style building used as a club with underground parking and which replaced an earlier building probably dating to the mid 19th century which projected out into line of the present road (fig. 3). A pay and display car park occupies the land along the site's north-east border.

The location within the town core and the proximity of other archaeological discoveries meant that, despite the possibility that earlier building work had damaged any archaeological deposits, there was still some potential for surviving deposits that would be affected by the current development work. In view of this, as a condition of planning permission granted by Hinckley and Bosworth District Council, a watching brief was required during groundworks to ensure that any affected deposits were adequately recorded.

As mentioned, the site was occupied until recently by a 1960s style club built predominantly of reinforced concrete which occupied almost the entire site with cellaring and car parking areas towards the Mansion Street side. At the time of the watching brief this building had been demolished leaving the front, south-eastern side just below pavement level with a bank of disturbed ground on the rear of the site. A small area along the north-eastern boundary remained undisturbed which is where an access ramp is to be built for the new development (fig. 4). It was the reduction of this area which was subject to the watching brief.

2. The Archaeological and Historical Background (from Bocock 2007)

The following is a brief summary of relevant sites listed on the Historic Environment Record for Leicestershire and Rutland (HER) taken from the ULAS Desk-Based Assessment (Bocock 2007).

Archaeological Background

No archaeological sites have been recorded within the proposed development area; however this may reflect the lack of systematic archaeological investigation. Previously archaeological investigations undertaken in Hinckley include a series of negative evaluations and watching briefs at Wood Lane (Hurford 2005), 14 Upper Bond Street (Kipling 2002a), land off St Mary's Road (Kipling 2002b) and Logix Park (Harvey 2002). In addition, a negative archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land further away at Outlands Drive (Jarvis 2002).

The application area is located within the historic medieval town core of Hinckley (**MLE2901**). A 25ft deep sandstone well was found during building works on Lower Bond Street, c. 40m to the north-east of the proposed development area (**MLE2877**). There is documentary evidence at Hinckley Priory for a religious cell, belonging to the Benedictines, c. 300m to the southeast (**MLE2878**). A cobbled surface was found c. 340m to the southwest, which is possibly a medieval road (**MLE2885**). Hinckley Castle is a medieval, possibly Saxo-Norman castle, located c. 350m to the south-east (**MLE2890**). St Mary's Church is a medieval extant church with 13th and 14th century features, c. 250m to the south-east (**MLE2894**). A pavement made of double rows of kidney stones was exposed indicating an earlier roadway to the south (**MLE2896**). There is documentary evidence for a medieval „Holy' well dedicated to St Mary (the Virgin), c. 750m to the east (**MLE2897**).

One prehistoric archaeological site has been recorded in the vicinity of the application site. An Iron Age boat shaped brooch (Italian) was found at Hinckley Castle, c.350m to the south-east of the development site (**MLE6500**).

Two Roman sites have been identified in the vicinity of the application area. Finds of tessera, pottery, wall plaster, a portrait bust and glass tear-shaped bottle suggest a possible Roman occupation site c. 900m to the north-east (**MLE2895**). In addition, two Roman coins were found c.550m to the south-west (**MLE7941**).

Various post-medieval archaeological sites have been recorded in the vicinity of the proposed development area. Timber framed cottages possibly dating to the 17th

century were located *c.* 250m to the south-east of the application area, however they were demolished in 1955 (**MLE2876**). Hall House is recorded at Hinckley Priory with a formal garden and moats, *c.* 300m to the south-east of the development site (**MLE2879**). There is also documentary evidence for a fishpond (**MLE2880**) and a post-medieval garden (**MLE2881**). There is documentary evidence for a post-medieval windmill at Mill Hill, *c.* 200m to the west (**MLE2886**), and to the west of the Grammar School *c.* 650m to the north-east (**MLE2888**). There is documentary evidence for a post-medieval tower windmill *c.* 400m to the south-west (**MLE2889**). A post-medieval barrel vaulted cistern was located *c.* 600m to the north-east (**MLE6006**). Building recording prior to demolition, revealed fragments of a timber framed building dated to 1625 (by dendrochronology), *c.* 130m to the south (**MLE9161**). Buildings at St Albert's Nursing Home were surveyed prior to demolition, *c.* 450m to the east (**MLE9162**). Buildings at 1-3 Regent Street, surveyed prior to demolition, showed a timber frame of poor quality, *c.* 120m to the south (**MLE9165**). Atkin's cottages (Knitwork factories) are a row of timber framed cottages of probable 17th century date, *c.* 50m to the north (**MLE9762**).

An oak lined well of unknown date is recorded at the foot of Castle Hill, below a cottage floor, *c.* 400m to the south-east of the proposed development area (**MLE2891**).

Historical Background

Hinckley (Hinchelie) is referred to in the Domesday Book as "The Earl of Aubrey also held Hinckley. 14 carucates of land. In lordship 4 ploughs; 8 slaves. 42 villagers with 16 smallholders and 3 Freemen have 9 1/2 ploughs. Meadow 6 furlongs in length and 3 furlongs wide; woodland 1 league long and 3 furlongs wide. The value was £6; now £10" (Morgan 1979). Soon after the Conquest, Hinckley became the property of Hugh de Grentesmainil, who owned considerable lands in Leicestershire. The manor then passed to several of the Earls of Leicester (Nichols 1811, 697). The name Hinckley means "Woodland clearing of a man called Hynca" (Mills 1998). The period from the mid-17th century to the early 19th century was one of expansion in Hinckley, with the growth of the stocking frame industry. However, a decline in the industry meant that Hinckley became one of the poorest parts of Leicestershire in the mid 19th century (Royle 1979, 53).

A map search was undertaken at the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Records Office (ROLLR), however no enclosure maps were available of the proposed development area. The 1782 Robinson Plan of Hinckley, although fairly schematic shows the area of the proposed development close to the centre of Hinckley and south of Lower Bond Street. Mansion Street is not marked but appears to correspond to Hog Lane north of the Market Place and Borough and opposite Stocken Head. Buildings appear to be present within the application area. The Ordnance Survey surveyors 2" to the mile map of 1814 (published 1834-5) shows the site as containing buildings (www.collectbritain.co.uk). The tithe map of Hinckley town centre 1846 shows the area as plot 140 „owned by William Neale Berry and others, occupied by William Gotteridge and others', described as „houses & c'. The first edition OS Map of 1887 shows several buildings fronting on to Mansion Street including a single large building labelled P.H (fig. 3). To the rear are several small outbuildings. The second edition OS Map of 1903 shows the large building as having been extended to the rear

possibly incorporating or replacing smaller units. The 1924 OS Map shows the south-western building to be labelled as 'Club' with further extensions to the rear. The 1961 OS Map shows the same building plan now labelled 'Hinckley Liberal Club'. The buildings to the north-east however have been demolished and it is shown as an open space. The building has been extended to the north-east on the 1993 OS map.

3. Archaeological Objectives

The objectives of the archaeological 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

All trace of former buildings had been removed prior to the commencement of the watching brief which may or may not have had an affect upon any underlying deposits especially as the site geology is of soft sand. Some building rubble and disturbed ground remained which had to be removed. The work consisted of ground reduction along the north-eastern edge of the site in preparation for a vehicle ramp. All excavation work was observed and the spoil scanned for finds.

All spoil from the excavation was removed using either a toothless ditching bucket fitted to the back actor of a JCB 3X mechanical excavator or by its front bucket. Initial stripping was done by removing bucket-width spits of overburden followed by similar spits through the natural substratum. Lower levels were removed using the front bucket of the mechanical excavator. All deposits were recorded by notes, photographs and sketches.

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

5. Results

The area to be stripped had between 0.3m and 1m of disturbed soil and building rubble directly on top of the clean natural substrate so it was not possible to ascertain whether this was the original ground level or if it had been reduced at an earlier date before the watching brief. The concrete and brick foundations for one of the club walls, a large drainpipe and a smaller brick-built retaining wall all ran north-west to south-east across this area (fig. 5). Once removed these revealed a clean brownish-orange sand as seen across the rest of the site. No archaeological deposits or features were observed either during stripping or in the face of the deep section created by the

work (fig. 5). A single piece of modern stoneware pottery was recovered from the disturbed overburden but was not retained.

A slate-capped brick-built well, with a diameter of 1.14m, was exposed in the southern corner of the watching brief area and may indicate the original height of ground level at the time immediately pre-dating the 1960s building. Figure 5 shows this well after removal of 3 or 4 courses of brick. The well was made of curved late 19th century hard-fired bricks laid without the use of mortar but with occasional pieces of thin slate to level the courses. It had been backfilled with sand and building rubble before being capped with 2 large slabs of welsh slate. This will be demolished down to formation level and may be filled with concrete according to building requirements.

6. Discussion

No archaeological deposits, features or pre-modern artefacts were encountered during the watching brief. It seems likely that the extensive use of reinforced concrete and the underground car park in such soft sand both during its construction and recent demolition have effectively removed any trace of earlier features.

From map and pictorial evidence it would appear that the area subject to the watching brief is behind the older buildings and may have been backyard plots. This may be the case if the well was outside the building. As the site was so disturbed it is possible that the only potential for survival of any features lies beneath the present line of the pavement in front of the site.

7. Archive

The archive consists of: this report, 1 pro-forma watching brief form, 1 digital photograph recording form, 1 contact sheet of digital photographs and one cd of digital photographs. It is to be held by Leicestershire County Council under accession code number X.A.39.2008

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 fieldwork was undertaken by A R Hyam. The project was managed by Dr P Clay.

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Figures

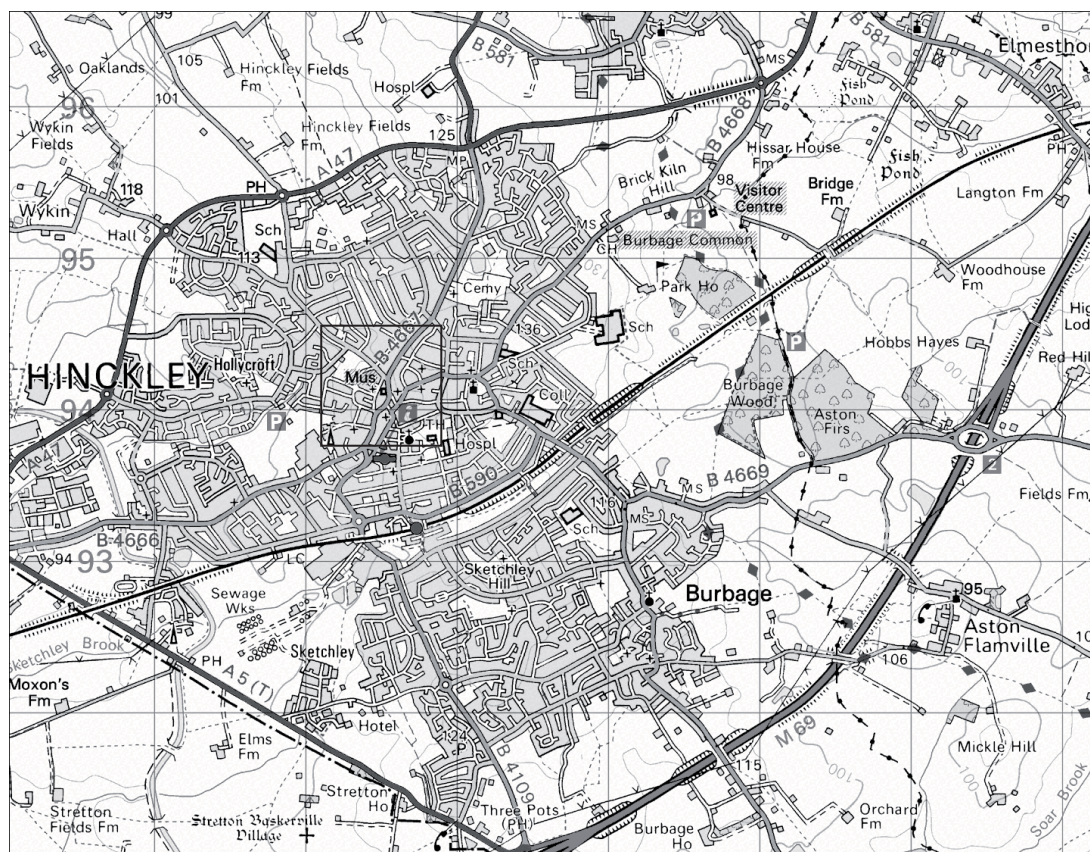


Figure 1. Site location

Reproduced from the Landranger 140 Leicester area 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10009495.



Figure 2. Development site location.

Original Scale 1:500 grids are at 50m intervals. (From Savage Hayward Ltd Plan 03 120.19)



Figure 3. Blue Bell Lodging House on site of present car park. Development site is behind this building. Source: F E Downes supervisor.



Figure 4. Area to be reduced.
Duke of Rutland pub shown in Fig. 3 in rear of picture.



Figure 5. Section of area being stripped.