

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
at the Concordia Theatre  
Stockwell Head, Hinckley, Leicestershire  
NGR: SP 426 940**

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**For: Concordia Theatre**

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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Concordia theatre Stockwell Head, Hinckley, Leicestershire, (NGR: SP 426 940)**

**Dan Stone**

### **1. Summary**

*An Archaeological watching brief was undertaken by ULAS on behalf of the Concordia Theatre during groundwork for the extension and alterations to form a new staircase and lifts at the Concordia Theatre, Stockwell Head, Hinckley (NGR: SP 426 940). The construction involved the reduction and levelling of the site area together with construction of new shafts. Attendance at the site occurred on the 15th and 16th of October 2008. No significant archaeological finds or deposits were observed during groundworks. The archive is to be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under accession number X.A.142.2008.*

### **2. Introduction**

This report presents the results of a watching brief on behalf of the Concordia Theatre, during groundworks for an extension and alterations to form a new staircase and lifts to the rear of the Concordia Theatre, Stockwell Head, Hinckley, (NGR SP 426 940). The theatre comprises a set of converted buildings formerly used as hosiery factories. The groundworks were within the rear north car park of the theatre, directly adjacent to the north side of the current premises. Site visits took place on the 15th and 16th of October 2008.

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG16, Archaeology & Planning), paragraph 30 and involved archaeological attendance for inspection and recording during groundworks within the development area to identify any deposits of archaeological importance.

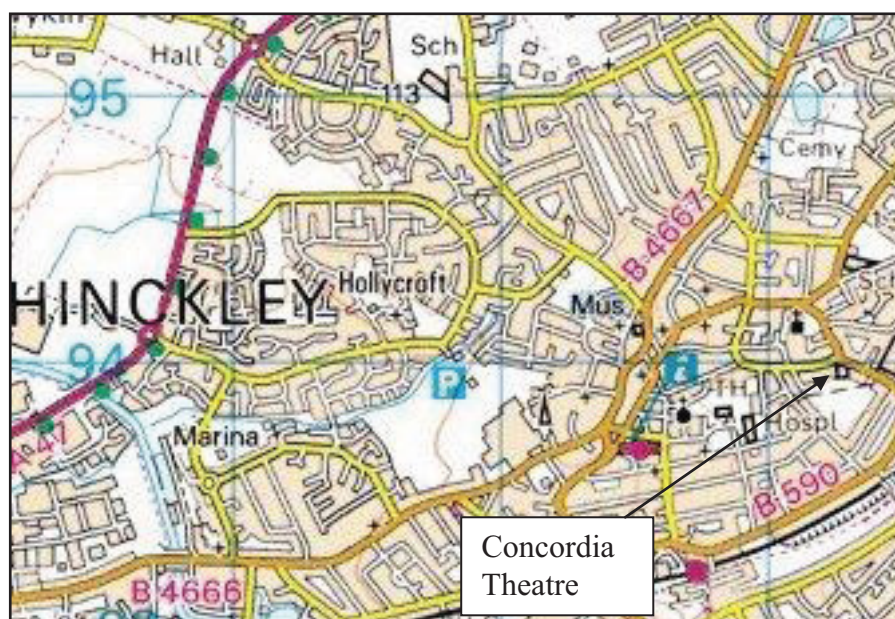


Figure 1: Site location 1:25, 000

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### 3. Site description, topography and geology

The site is located to the north of the Concordia Theatre, Stockwell Head, Hinckley, (figure 1) within the rear car park of the current premises. The site is lined by buildings to the south and the east, converted to house the theatre and is adjacent to main roads to the north and west. The Ordnance Survey Drift Geology map sheet 169 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of sand and gravel underlying boulder clay.



#### 4. Archaeological and Historical background

##### *The prehistoric and Roman periods*

The following are details of relevant sites in the vicinity of the development site and included in the SMR.

Roman activity in the centre of Hinckley is represented by a probable Roman villa (49SW.AJ), just to the north west of the town centre and finds of Roman coins on the southern side of the town (49SW. AP).

##### *The medieval period*

Hinckley (Hinchelie) appears in the Domesday Book in the Hundred of Guthlaxton under the ownership of Earl Aubrey and valued at £10. 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).

A number of medieval sites are known to exist in the centre of Hinckley. A medieval well is recorded on the corner of Lower Bond Street. Other sites dating from the medieval period include a Motte and Bailey castle (49SW.V), Hinckley Priory (49SW.E), a medieval cobbled roadway (49SW.N) and a medieval church (49SW.AF).

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).

#### 5. Projects Aims

The aims of the through archaeological monitoring and observations were:

1. To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
3. To produce an archive and report of any results.

#### 6. Methodology

Potential archaeology was identified through the archaeological supervision and observation of the stripping and removal of existing topsoil, the reduction of underlying subsoil and the performance of other groundwork by the client's contractors. Where appropriate, trench sections were examined and recorded and spoil was examined for finds retrieval.

All work and archaeological deposits encountered was recorded in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, the standard policy and practice of ULAS and adherence to the University's Health and Safety policy.

## **7. Results**

The client's building contractors proposed to excavate the new lift shaft cavity to a formation level of 3m below present ground surface (Figure 2 box marked B-E), followed by excavating a void on the north- west corner of the new extension ( Figure 2 box marked F- I) which would underpin the new foundations where they passed over a modern flood drain to a depth of 3.5m approx from modern ground levels, and finish with excavation of the footings of the other walls constituting the new extension to a depth of 1m. Machining was carried out using a backhoe loader with a 0.6m toothed bucket.

The excavation of the footings of the double lift shaft (Figure 2 box marked B-E), revealed a backfilled cellar truncating the natural to a depth of 3m from the modern external ground surface and occupying an undetermined area containing the footprint of the new lift shaft. This depth coincided with the formation level required for the new groundwork and groundwork ceased at this level.

The material within the lift cavity comprised modern brick, slate and building debris presumed to derive from the demolition of a superstructure associated with the subsurface room. Along the section of the current upstanding northern wall of the theatre two 1.5m wide breaks in the wall were observed. These were each bricked up and possibly represented approximately 1.5m high access points into the current cellar of the adjacent theatre. Personal communications with site staff suggested this may have been the demolished remains of possible boiler rooms and coal bunkers associated with the buildings which currently house the Concordia theatre, prior to their conversion to the theatre.

Observation of the sections of the lift shaft cavity, (Figure 2 box marked B-E), suggested the exposed backfilled subsurface room extended west and north- west beyond the limit of the new shaft. In a corner of the north - east section of the cavity fine dark orange sand was observed. This was at a depth of 0.9m from the current surface in section. In the north - west corner of the cavity this same sand was observed at a higher level approximately 0.4m below the current ground surface. This material was interpreted as the underlying natural.

A further deep excavation was carried out at the North West corner of the new extension (Figure 2 box marked F- I) to underpin the new walls where they passed over a storm drain which traversed the rear car park. The sections of this void revealed extensive modern disturbance similar in nature to that observed within the lift shaft cavities. In the north - east corners and west side of the cavity subsurface, walls were seen and a brick floor observed in section. The southern section of the void comprised modern brick, slate and building debris presumed to derive from the demolition of a superstructure associated with a subsurface room, probably the continuation north of that seen in the lift shaft cavity. A storm drain was observed



cutting this debris along the southern side of the cavity. Within the west half of the northern face of the cavity, fine orange sand was observed approximately 0.4m below ground surface and horizons of modern deposits. This was identical to deposits seen further south and interpreted as the underlying natural.

A third excavation was conducted within the interior of the existing building which revealed further brick floors and possible subsurface rooms continuing through the wall towards the area of the rear car park. These were assumed to be associated with those already observed in the exterior.

No associated significant *in situ* archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were observed.

## **8. Conclusion.**

The excavations revealed extensive disturbed made up ground across the area of groundwork. The natural ground was observed truncated by earlier subsurface brick-lined rooms and walkways probably representing basements of demolished buildings formerly occupying the rear car park. These were observed high in the sections of excavated voids approximately a maximum of 0.3 m below ground surface and horizons of modern deposits. These activities may have also truncated surface horizons across the site to produce the horizons observed in the excavated voids. These horizons consisted of modern tarmac, brick and hard core make up layers.

No archaeological deposits were observed during the watching brief.

## **9. Acknowledgements and publication**

I would like to thank the representatives of the client Concordia Theatre for their help and co-operation on site. The project was managed by Richard Buckley and the fieldwork was carried out by the author, Dan Stone both of ULAS. A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. The report has been added to the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) Online Access to the index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York.

## **10. Archive**

The archive consists of 1 copy of this report, 2 watching brief recording forms, 1 copy of site location plans, 1 photo index form, 1 colour digital photo contact sheet, and 1 CD containing 15 digital photos. It will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council, under accession number X.A142.2008.



## 11. Bibliography

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### *Oasis*

INFORMATION REQUIRED	EXAMPLE
Project Name	An archaeological watching brief at the Concordia theatre , Stockwell head Hinckley.
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Dan Stone
Previous/Future work	Unknown
Current Land Use	Parking space
Development Type	Extension and alteration to commercial property.
Reason for Investigation	PPG16
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	( NGR : SP 426 940 )
Start/end dates of field work	15 th and 16 th October 2008
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
<b>Study Area *</b>	Approx 0.25 ha



Figure 3: rear of Concordia theatre showing site location.



Figure 4 : exposure of first of two potential coal bunker openings.



Figure 5 : bricked up coal bunker passing through external wall.



Figure 6: south east facing section of lift shaft void, showing natural beneath made up ground.





Figure 7: view north east of second excavation.



Figure 8: view of north east section showing subsurface walling.