

**An Archaeological watching Brief  
At The Long Field High School,  
Ambleside Way, Melton Mowbray.**

**NGR: SK 743 186**

**Andrew Hyam**

**For:** Leicestershire County Council,  
Property Services

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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Long Field High School, Ambleside Way, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. NGR: SK 743 186**

Andrew Hyam

### **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 24th of February 2009 in advance of a new sports facility within the grounds of The Long Field High School, Melton Mowbray. The new development, covering an area of approximately 0.15ha, lies in the south east corner of the school site which is currently undergoing a programme of refurbishment and expansion. The school lies within an area of moderate to high potential for undisturbed archaeological features and deposits from all periods. The footprint of a sports hall was stripped during this watching brief revealing areas of undisturbed natural substratum beneath landscaped, and sterile, subsoil and topsoil. No archaeological deposits or features were present within the development area.*

*Records will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under Accession Number X.A.74.2009*

### **Introduction**

In accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG 16, Archaeology and Planning), para 30, this document forms the report for an archaeological watching brief on land at The Long Field High School, Ambleside Way, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (NGR: SK 743 186). The Long Field School is currently undergoing a programme of refurbishment including the construction of a new sports hall, the footprint of which is the subject of this watching brief. The archaeological work has been commissioned by Property Services, Leicestershire County Council.

The Long Field High School lies on the western side of Melton Mowbray on Ambleside Way, which is to the north of the A607 Leicester Road. The school site is located in an angle created by the Melton to Leicester railway line and a small branch line curving to the north west (figs. 1 and 2). The River Wreake forms the western boundary of this fairly low lying site. The sports hall is to be built immediately to the south of the present school buildings and to the west of a tennis court with a tarmac surface (fig. 3). The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 142 indicates that the underlying geology of the site is likely to consist of alluvium over Boulder Clay. The generally flat site lies at an average height of approximately 73m above O.D.

Although approximately 1km from the Historic core of Melton Mowbray an archaeological desk-based assessment for the development indicated that the site lay within an area of moderate to high archaeological potential with remains from the Neolithic to medieval being recorded within close proximity. In view of this the Senior Planning Archaeologist of the Historic and Natural Environment Team at the Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to the planning officer at Melton Borough Council, recommended that a programme of archaeological work take place during the development.

## **Background**

Although archaeological work has taken place around the development site no work has been undertaken within it. Cartographic evidence indicates that the area consisted of small open fields until the arrival of the Syston and Peterborough (later the Midland) and the Great Northern railways which crossed each other at this point. A loop line, which went out of use before 1904, curved to the north across the middle of the site and is still in evidence with a surviving shallow earthwork. The Long Field School was built on this open land and opened in 1982 and contains a main building block located in the north eastern corner of the site. To the south east of this main block are hard-surfaced car parks and tennis courts (fig. 4).

The development area, adjacent to the western side of the tennis courts, is on very flat and level ground currently used as playing fields. Further west across the site is the low embankment for the disused railway loop beyond which the playing fields continue to the western border of the site.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the archaeological watching brief were:

To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits or features.

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 produce an archive and report of any results.

## **Methodology**

The footprint of the new sports hall was stripped of topsoil and some subsoil using a toothless ditching bucket to create a level surface ready for laying stone as a piling mat for the piles. As the water table is quite high in this area the building is to be built on piles rather than on conventional deeper foundations. The overburden was removed in spits under supervision and all spoil scanned for finds. The work was recorded on standard pro-forma watching brief recording sheets.

All deposits were recorded by notes, sketches and digital colour photographs. All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS)*.

## **Results**

The area being stripped in advance of building the sports hall was roughly rectangular area measuring approximately 35m by 65m. The area is on the same north west to south east alignment as the present school buildings and adjacent tennis courts (fig. 4). A layer of dark grey brown topsoil between 0.1 and 0.15m deep was removed to reveal a mid yellowish brown silty clay subsoil. In order to create a level space some of the subsoil was also stripped revealing patches of clean pale brownish yellow clay natural beneath. The subsoil varied in depth from virtually nothing to approximately

0.1m (judged by very small-scale hand excavations). Elsewhere, predominantly towards the western edge of the stripped area, the depth of subsoil only appeared to be around 0.08m before reaching the natural substratum (fig. 5). Again, areas of natural clay could be seen where the subsoil had been completely removed. Patches of modern disturbance, characterised by modern brick and drain pipe rubble, could be seen in places in the remaining subsoil. Sample removal of some of this disturbance by hand showed it to be sitting on top of undisturbed natural.

All spoil was inspected during removal by machine and after dumping on the spoil heap. The remaining subsoil and areas of disturbance were also scrutinised for finds or deposits. Three modern decimal coins were found in the topsoil as were a number of modern hard-fired white glazed pottery sherds. Several fragments of modern glazed drain pipe were noted embedded into the stripped surface of the subsoil, although it is possible that these had been redeposited from the disturbed areas during stripping. None of this material was retained.

No archaeological deposits or features were observed in the exposed natural or in the semi-stripped subsoil.

### **Discussion**

The shallow nature of the remaining subsoil gives the impression that the site has been levelled by shaving the subsoil and importing or recovering a thin skim of topsoil. Although the underlying natural was only seen in patches across the site, where it was visible there was no indication that any archaeological features or deposits were present. The lack of any archaeological material within the stripped spoil or in the subsoil also points to there being no features present within the development area.

### **Archive**

The archive consists of:

This report,

1 pro-forma watching brief form (with photo records included),

1 contact sheet of digital photographs,

1 cd of this report and the digital photographs.

The archive is to be held by Leicestershire County Council under Accession Number X.A.74.2009

### **Publication**

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

### **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork was undertaken by A R Hyam. The project was managed by R J Buckley.

## **Bibliography**

Hunt, L. 2007. *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for The Long Field High School, Ambleside Way, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire*. ULAS Report Number: 2007-036

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## Appendix 1. Figures

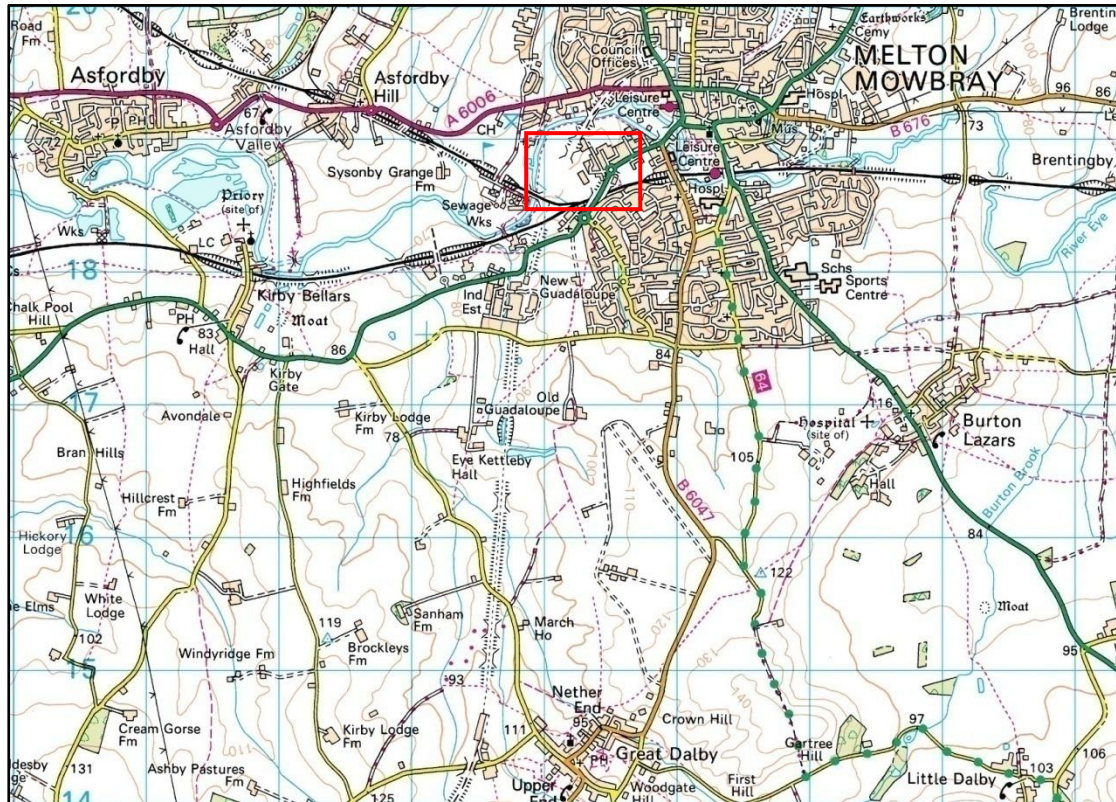


Figure 1. Location of Long Field School.  
Ordnance Survey Licence Number: AL100029495



Figure 2. Plan of Long Field School grounds (highlighted).  
Source: Developer.



Figure 3. Footprint of sports hall.  
Area highlighted in red.





Figure 4. Area after stripping. Facing north east  
Existing school on left of picture. Stone pile mat being laid.



Figure 5. Southern area of site. Facing north east.

**Appendix 2. OASIS summary**

<b>INFORMATION REQUIRED</b>	<b>EXAMPLE</b>
Project Name	Long Field High School, Melton Mowbray
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	R Buckley
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	None
Current Land Use	School playing fields.
Development Type	School sports hall
Reason for Investigation	PPG16
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK 743 186
Start/end dates of field work	24.02.2009
Archive Recipient	LCC
Study Area	0.15ha