



# University of Leicester

## Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Watching Brief  
At 18 The Newarke (formerly the  
William Baker Building), Leicester

NGR: SK 582 040

Mathew Morris



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**An Archaeological Watching Brief**  
**At 18 The Newarke (formerly the William Baker Building)**  
**Leicester**

**NGR: SK 582 040**

**Mathew Morris**

**For: De Montfort University Estates Department**

**Planning application no. 20062249**

Checked by
<b>Signed:</b> ..... <b>Date:</b> .....
<b>Name:</b> .....
Approved by
<b>Signed:</b> ..... <b>Date:</b> .....
<b>Name:</b> .....

**University of Leicester**  
Archaeological Services  
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH  
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at 18 The Newarke (formerly the William Baker Building), Leicester (SK 582 040)**

Mathew Morris

### ***Summery***

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out in the former service yard to the rear of 18 The Newarke (formerly the William Baker Building), Leicester (SK 582 040) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between 16th and 20th November 2007. The work was carried out on behalf of De Montfort University Estates Department in advance of construction of a new lift-shaft against the rear of the building. Work involved supervision and inspection of a small machine excavated trench. The results of the investigation proved negative apart from a thick layer of dark waterlogged silty-clay, probably post-medieval 'garden' soil. The site archive will be held by Leicester Museum Services under the accession number A10.2010*

### **Introduction**

This document constitutes the final report for an archaeological watching brief carried out to the rear of 18 The Newarke (formerly the William Baker Building), Leicester (SK 582 040) (Figure 1). The work was carried out on behalf of De Montfort University Estates Department by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between 16th and 20th November 2007.

The proposed construction of a new lift shaft against the rear elevation of the former William Baker factory, as part of its conversion from industrial to educational use (Planning Application No. 20062249), was located within De Montfort University's Leicester Campus c.800m south-west of the city centre (Figure 2). The total development area covered c.44 square meters in the service yard of the former factory.

The watching brief was requested by the City Archaeologist in his capacity as archaeological advisor to Leicester City Council's planning authority, in accordance with DOE Planning Policy Guideline 16 (PPG16: Archaeology and planning, para.30).

### **Geology and Topography**

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 156 (Leicester), indicates that the underlying geology likely consists of superficial deposits of alluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel overlying bedrock deposits of Triassic mudstone belonging to the Mercia Mudstone Group (BGS 2008). The site lies at c.57.6m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) c.36m to the east of the River Soar.

### **Historical and Archaeological Background**

De Montfort University is located in an area of considerable archaeological significance. It is situated within the southern suburb of the Roman and medieval town and the site lies just south of the Roman and medieval town defences.

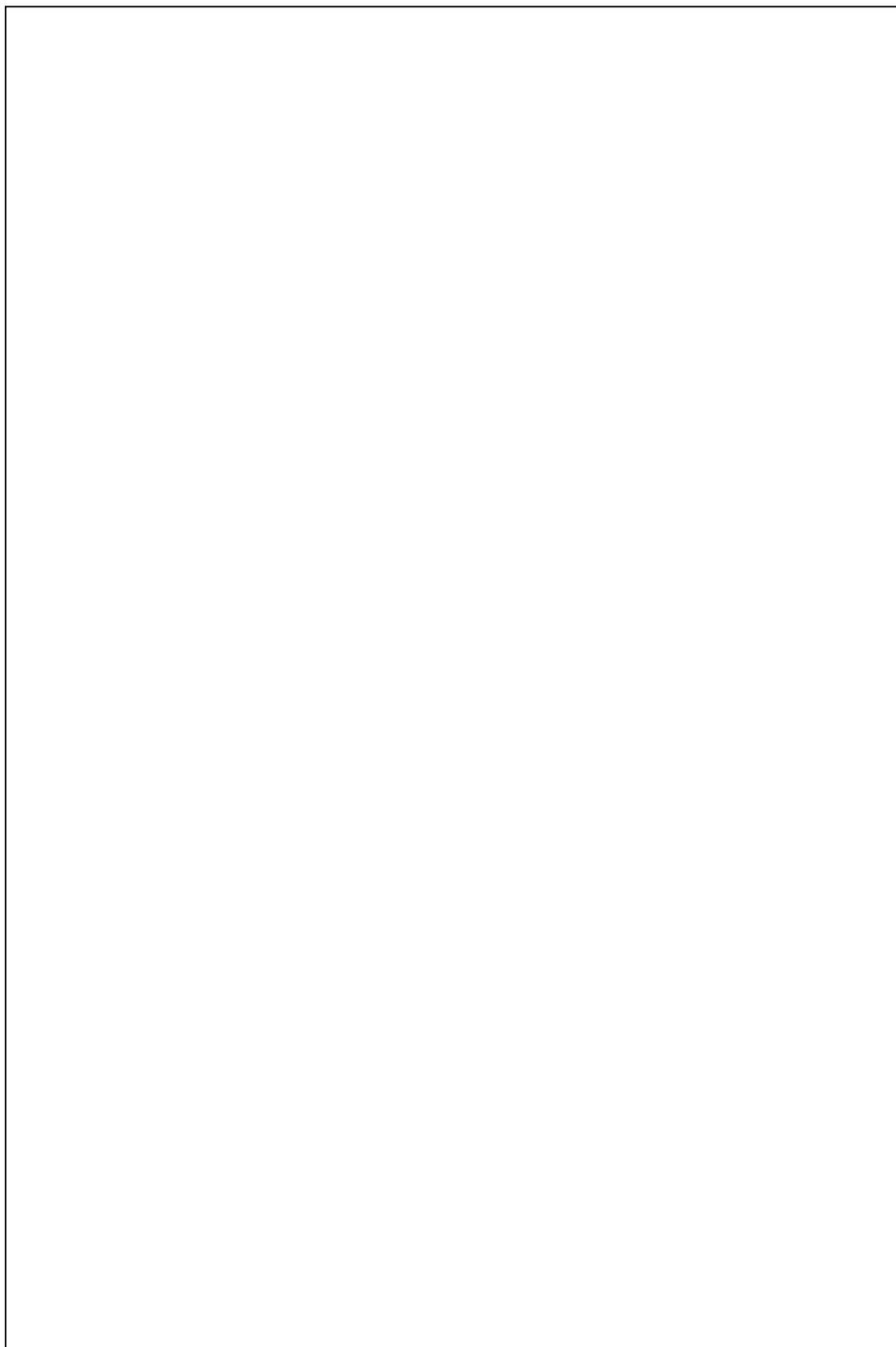


Figure 1: Location maps with development area highlighted.

Based on 1:1250 Ordnance Survey® map. © Crown Copyright 2010. All Rights Reserved. License number AL1000294495.

Other excavations carried out nearby for De Montfort University have uncovered an extensive Roman cemetery to the east beneath the Elfed Thomas building in 1993 and an Anglo-Saxon building to the south beneath the Innovation Centre on Bonners Lane in 1993-1994. Further work to the south and east on Grange Lane and York Road has also revealed significant Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval remains. Whilst more recently excavations beneath the new PACE and Hugh Aston Buildings in 2006-2008 have uncovered occupation along the western frontage of both the Tripontium Road, the principal Roman route into the town from the south, and Oxford Street, its medieval successor.

By the late medieval period, the site was incorporated into the Newarke or 'New Work', a walled religious precinct containing the College of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1645, temporary defences were erected to the south and east of the Newarke during the Royalist and Parliamentary sieges of Leicester. Post-Civil War, the Newarke became one of the most affluent suburbs in Leicester until the mid-19th century and 18th century maps show the site to be covered in orchards. Since the early 20th century the site has been the William Baker Factory, before now becoming part of De Montfort University.

An evaluation of the site in 2001 by Northamptonshire Archaeology uncovered a number of archaeological features and layers including substantial stone walls believed to correspond with the Newarke Precincts northern and western walls (Hallam and Webster 2001).

### **Archaeological Objectives**

The principal objectives of the watching brief were:

- To identify the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date of any archaeological deposits to be effected by the proposed ground works.
- To excavate and record any archaeological deposits to be effected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce a report and archive of any results.

### **Methodology**

The proposed work involved the excavation of a 3.5m x 3.5m trench to a depth of c.2.6m below ground level. This required the presence of a professional archaeologist to supervise all work likely to impact upon any archaeological remains.

The work involved the supervision of the removal of modern overburden across the development area in order to identify any archaeological deposits or the natural substratum. This was carried out using a mini JCB mechanical digger with a 0.5m toothed bucket. All exposed areas, sections and spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. Any archaeological deposits were hand cleaned, planned, photographed and sample excavated as appropriate to addressing the objectives of the watching brief.

All work followed the *Institute for Archaeologists' (IFA) Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS)*.

## Results

The main lift-shaft area, measuring *c.*3.5m by *c.*3.5m, was excavated under observation to a depth of *c.*1.3m below ground level (Figure 3). Initial machining removed *c.*1.3m of modern demolition material, mainly bricks mixed with loose silts and sands. Beneath this a very dark grey silty-clay was exposed. This was waterlogged and was evident across the extent of the excavation (Figure 4).

Following the insertion of twelve steel piles a further *c.*2m by *c.*2m trench was excavated centrally at the base of the main trench, *c.*0.5m from the wall of the former William Baker Building. This penetrated through the waterlogged silty-clay, identified as being *c.*0.65m thick, for a further *c.*1.3m. Possible natural substratum was reached *c.*1.95m below ground level. This was greyish-yellow sandy-clay continuing below the depth of excavation. No archaeological features were observed during the watching-brief but a small quantity of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the dark silty-clay layer.

Further service trenches were excavated following the completion of the lift-shaft trench. These were dug to a depth of *c.*1-1.5m mainly through modern disturbance. No archaeology was seen during this work.

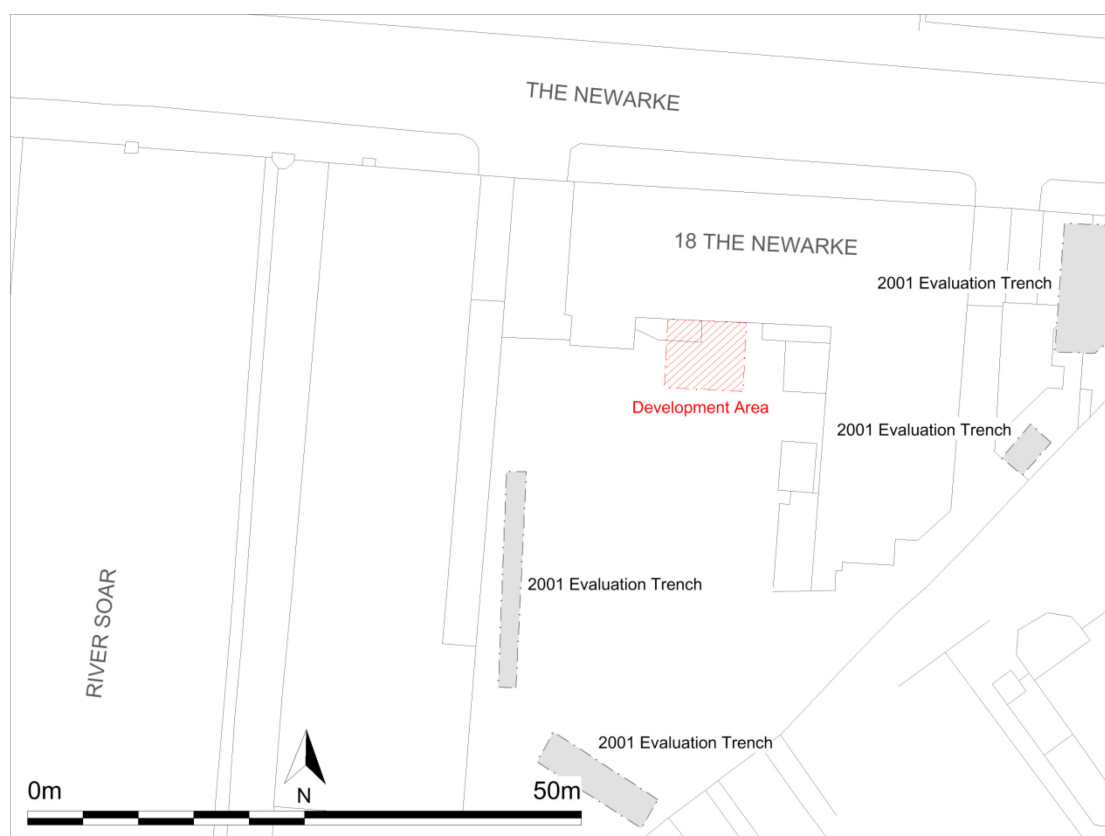


Figure 2: Trench location plan

Adapted from 1:2500 Ordnance Survey® map supplied by client. © Crown copyright 2010. All rights reserved. License number AL100029495

## Discussion

Despite being within an area previously identified as having good potential for surviving archaeology no features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance

were identified during the ground-works. The dark, waterlogged silty-clay is likely a product of soil deposition during the post-medieval period, when maps such as Stukeley's of 1722 and Roberts' of 1741 show this area of the Newarke to be orchards.

### **Bibliography**

- B.G.S., 2008 *England and Wales Sheet 156 Leicester: Bedrock and Superficial Deposits*. 1:50,000 scale geology series.
- Hallam, T. and Webster, M., 2001 *The Newarke, Leicester: Archaeological Evaluation, November 2001*. Northamptonshire Archaeology unpublished report.

### **Archive**

The site archive consists of: 15 digital photographs  
1 A4 photo index

The archive will be held by Leicester Museum Services under the accession number A10.2010.

### **Publication**

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York (Appendix 1).

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal, the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, in due course.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks are extended to the client for their co-operation and assistance on site. Fieldwork was undertaken by Martin Shore, and the report written by Mathew Morris. The project was managed for ULAS by Richard Buckley.

Mathew Morris MA  
ULAS  
University of Leicester  
University Road  
Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel: 0116 252 2848  
Fax: 0116 252 2614  
Email: mlm9@le.ac.uk

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Figure 3: The excavated lift-shaft trench prior to excavation of the internal 2x2m area. Looking north.



Figure 4: West-facing section showing modern overburden, dark waterlogged silty-clay and possible natural substratum. Looking east.

### Appendix 1: OASIS Database entry

Project Name	18 The Newarke (former William Baker Building), Leicester
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Mathew Morris
Previous/Future work	Evaluation by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2001
Current Land Use	Former factory
Development Type	Lift shaft
Reason for Investigation	PPG 16
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	SK 582 040
Start/end dates of field work	16/11/2007 – 20/11/2007
Archive Recipient	Leicester Museum Services
Study Area	44 square meters

## Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay  
University of Leicester Archaeological  
Services (ULAS)  
University of Leicester,  
University Road,  
Leicester LE1 7RH

**T:** +44 (0)116 252 2848

**F:** +44 (0)116 252 2614

**E:** [ulas@le.ac.uk](mailto:ulas@le.ac.uk)

**w:** [www.le.ac.uk/ulas](http://www.le.ac.uk/ulas)



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