



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
at Elm Farm,
Main Street,
Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire
(SP 38191 95568)**

Gerwyn Richards



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at Elm Farm, Main Street,
Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire.
(NGR SP 38191 95568)**

Gerwyn Richards

Planning Application: 10/00338/FUL & 10/00339/LBC

For: Mr A. Emery.

Approved by

Signed: ...



..

Date: ...25/10/2010.....

Name: .R.J. Buckley

University of Leicester
Archaeological Services
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 252 2848 Fax: (0116) 252 2614
www.le.ac.uk/ulas

**An Archaeological Watching Brief carried out at Elm Farm, Main Street, Higham
on the Hill, Leicestershire (SP 38191 95568)**

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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services was commissioned by Mr A. Emery to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks in advance of the construction of new two storied extension to Elm Farm, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire.

The proposed development area had been identified as being of archaeological potential, located within the historic settlement core of the village. The exposed section on the Main Street frontage revealed an earlier clay floor and other potentially archaeological layers. These layers were unaffected by the groundworks and remain in-situ. Evidence of late 19th- or early 20th-century truncation was observed within the easternmost footing trench as well as a four-post timber structure, possibly stalls.

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, under the accession number X.A172. 2010.

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services was commissioned by Mr A. Emery to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the construction of a two storied extension to Elm Farm, 70 Main Street, Higham on the Hill (SP 38191 95568; *Figure 1*). The proposed development area was located to the east of Elm Farm, abutting the eastern gable, on the Main Street frontage. The groundworks initially consisted of the excavation of foundation trenches following the line of a recently demolished brick building (which was surveyed in 2010, Smith, D & Hayward, R.), the floor of this earlier building was also to be lifted and the floor made up reduced.

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates that the proposed development area lies in an area of archaeological interest, located within the medieval and post-medieval historic settlement core of the village of Higham on the Hill. Immediately to the south of the proposed development area the excavation of a test pit recovered two sherds of Romano British pottery (HER Ref: MLE17110). Further to the south west, more Romano British pottery was recovered at 29 Nuneaton Lane (MLE 17109). Elm Farm itself is Grade II Listed, the listing description is as follows (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>):

Farmhouse. Early to mid C18. Red brick on Charnwood rubble stone plinth with plain tile roof and brick stack to left of centre. 3 room plan with unheated room to right. 2 storeys with toothed brick eaves band. 3

window front; large wooden casements with segmental heads on ground floor. Central 6-panel door in architrave surround with flat-roofed openwork timberporch-surround. 1 curtilage building.

The Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council as advisor to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council advised that the proposed works may have an impact upon buried archaeological remains. In view of this a programme of archaeological attendance was approved. This consisted of a watching brief carried out during the groundworks undertaken by the client's contractors. This work followed Planning Policy Statement 5 (*Planning and the Historic Environment*) (Department for Communities and Local Government March 2010).

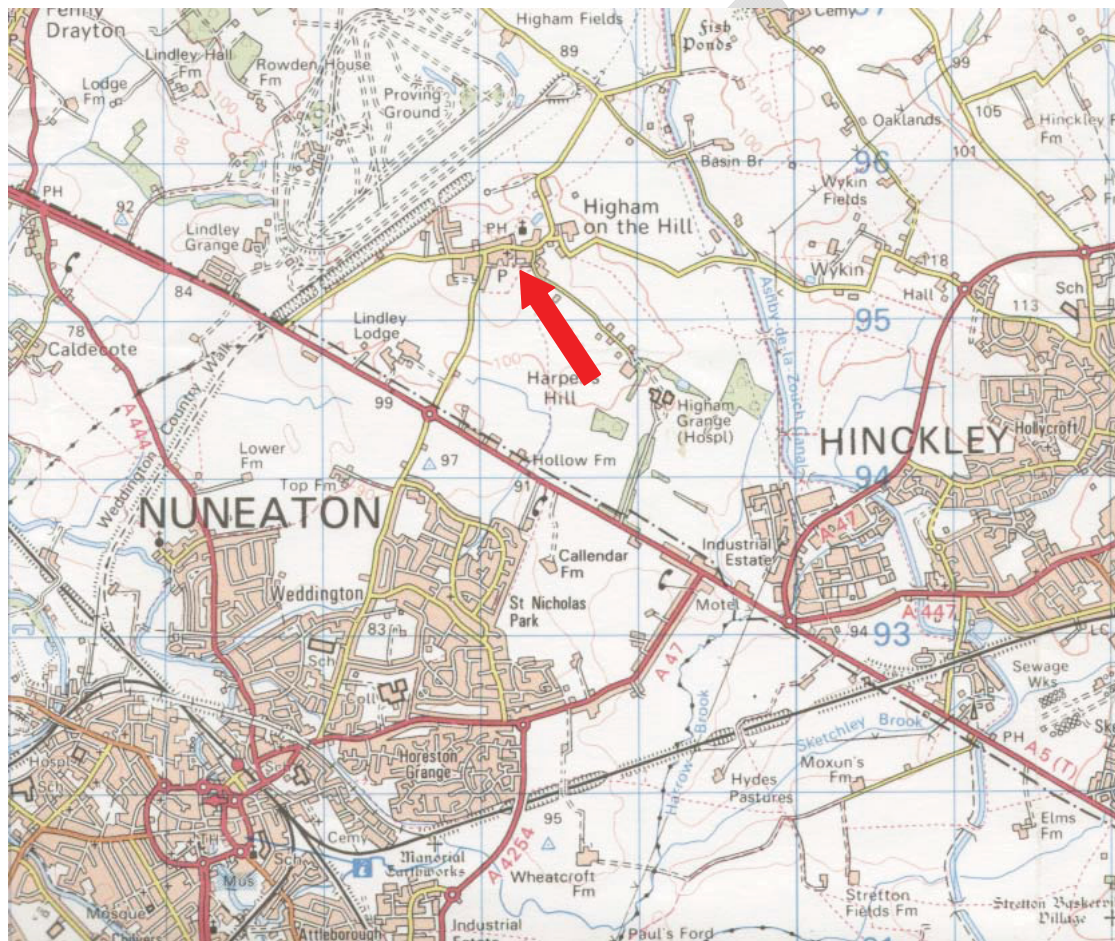


Figure 1. Site location

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2. Aims and Methodology

The aim of the archaeological work, through archaeological inspection and recording of groundworks by the client's contractors, was to:

- To identify the presence/absence of archaeological deposits.
- 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

The work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2006) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008), the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LMARS) and adhered to the University's Health and Safety policy. The methodology to be followed was detailed in the *Design Specification for Archaeological work* (ULAS 10-179).

All groundworks were carried out by a 1.5 tonne mini digger fitted with a toothed bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. The exposed substratum was observed and the spoil searched for finds. The watching brief took place on September 27th and October 1st 2010.

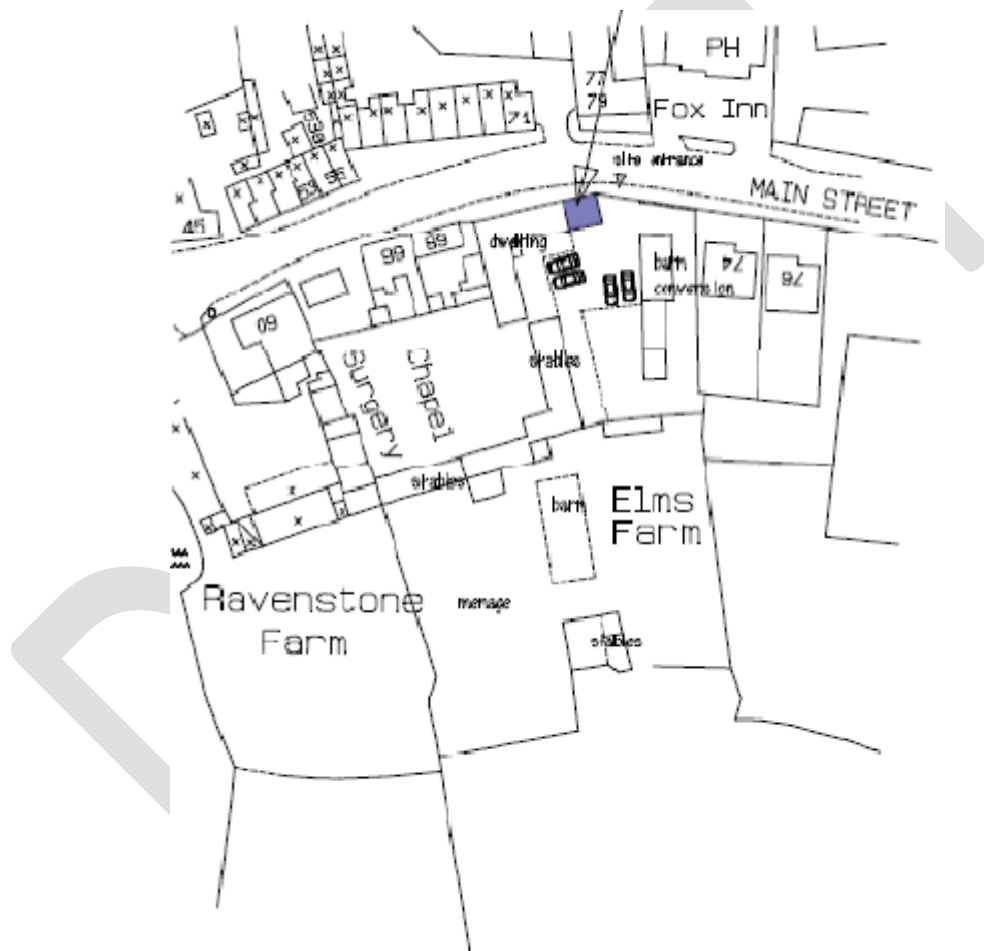


Figure 2 Area of archaeological watching brief (in blue).
(Supplied by Client, Not to Scale)

3. Results

The proposed development area is located on the eastern gable of Elm Farm, on the Main Street frontage (*Figures 2 & 7*); the existing building had been demolished prior to the first visit, leaving only a Victorian blue brick floor. A total of three footing trenches were excavated along the wall lines of the previous building, the trenches were 750mm wide and approximately 1m deep. The southernmost trench uncovered

the undisturbed substratum almost immediately and contained nothing of archaeological significance. The easternmost trench contained a dry-built red brick wall within the west-facing section, aligned north-south. The brick dimensions were 9inch by 3inch by 4inch, suggesting a later 19th-century construction date. A void towards the northern end of the trench revealed a ceramic pipe, on the same alignment as the wall, suggesting the two are related.

The frontage trench contained a quantity of Charnwood rubble stone and brick rubble, clearly relating to the earlier building. The north facing section (*Figures 3, 4 & 8*) did contain a number of potentially archaeological layers which had been sealed by the floor of the recently demolished building. There were two separate floor levels; the westernmost floor (009) was made up of a cobbled surface and appeared to abutt the gable wall of Elm Farm whilst the second floor (008) was to the east and was red clay. A single sherd of 18th- to 19th-century glazed earthenware pottery was recovered from (005), but was on the surface of (008) suggesting a likely occupation and abandonment date (Finn, N. pers comm. Not retained). There were also two large post pipes, [001] and [002] which were clearly later as they cut all the visible layers, both have decayed timber at their bases.

The proposed works would have no further impact upon these layers and they were recorded and left *in-situ*.

A further visit was carried out once the blue-brick floor had been lifted in order to monitor further ground reduction work. Once the blue bricks had been lifted two upright timber beams were exposed [010] and [011] (*Figure 6*); which, along with the outline of those observed within the northern trench ([001] & [002]), created a square pattern; once removed the beams reached a similar depth as [001] and [002]. The exact purpose of this structure is unclear; it is possible that the beams represent the remains of earlier stalls within the recently demolished building. If so, it is unclear as to why the beams were set so deeply below the ground level.

The material within the footprint of the proposed new build was reduced by approximately 200mm at the eastern end increasing to 350mm at the western end, with the exception a number of isolated patches of gypsum floor revealing nothing of archaeological significance.

4. Conclusion

The proposed development area occupied a promising location within the historic settlement core of Higham on the Hill, but only limited archaeological features were observed, mostly within the north-facing frontage trench. The two exposed floor surfaces are most likely evidence of earlier phases of the recently demolished building and the four-post structure post-dates the other floors and probably relates to a more recent phase of occupation.

5. Archive & Publication

The site archive consists of:

- 1 A2 permagraph sheet containing sections, plans & context descriptions
- 16 Black & White negatives and contact prints
- CD containing 18 digital images
- 1 A4 contact sheet
- 2 A4 watching brief sheets
- 1 A4 re-production of 1804 enclosure award
- Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report Number 2010-194)

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the Accession Number X.A172. 2010.

A version of the summary (above) will be published in *Transactions of Leicestershire Historical & Archaeological Society* in due course.

6. References

IfA, 2008 *Code of Conduct*

IfA, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

7. Acknowledgements

The survey was commissioned by Andrew Emery. The watching brief was carried out by Gerwyn Richards; the project was managed by Richard Buckley.

Gerwyn Richards
ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel:0116 252 2848
Fax: 0116 252 2614

www.le.ac.uk/ulas

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Figure 3 North Facing Frontage Section (western end).



Figure 4 North Facing Frontage Section (eastern end).



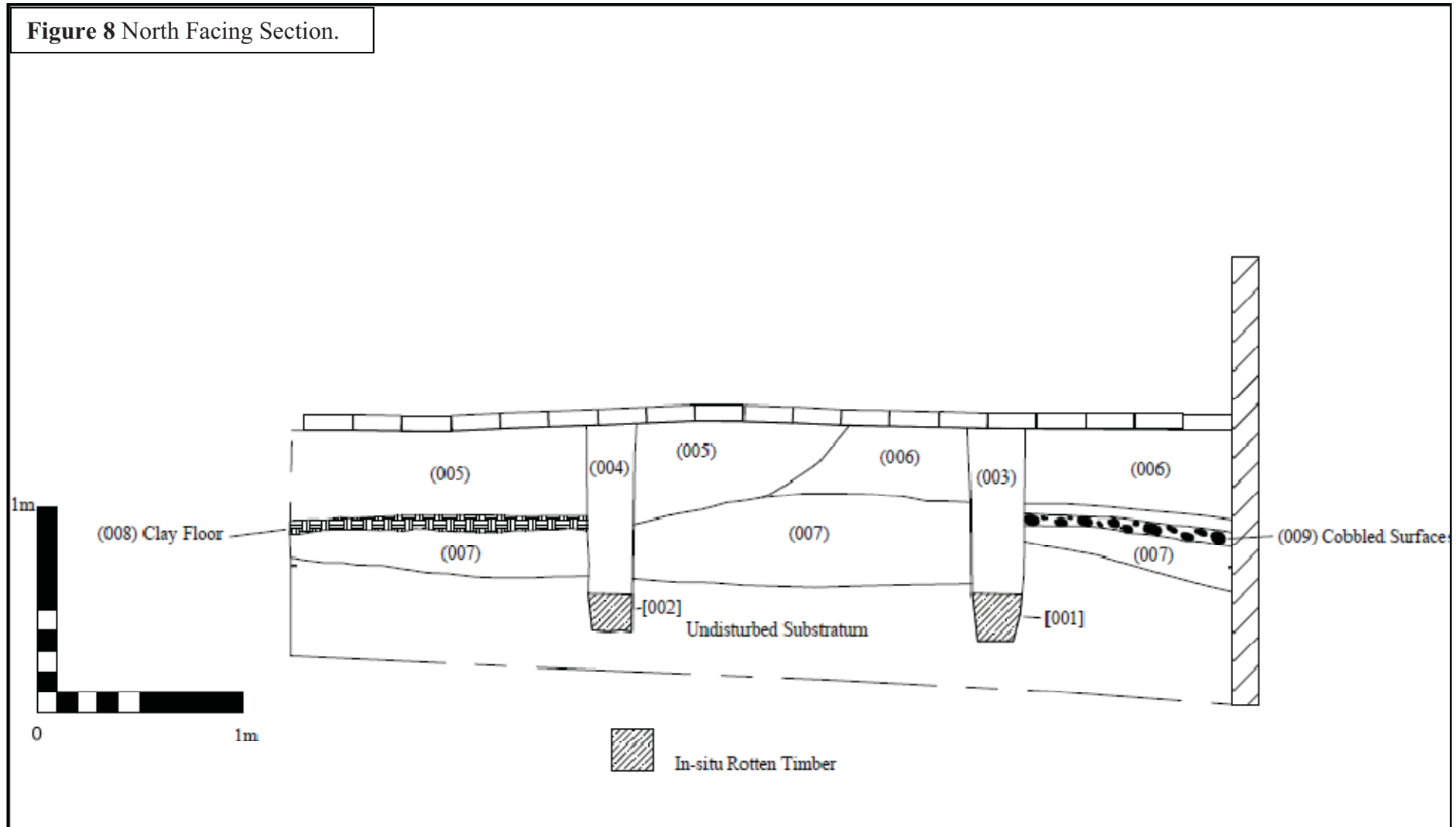
Figure 5 Brickwork Exposed in Easternmost Trench.



Figure 6 Timber Recovered from [010] & [011].



Figure 7 Proposed Development Area Including Archaeological Observations.



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

w: www.le.ac.uk/ulas

