An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Land at Gynsill Court, Gynsill Drive, Anstey, Leicestershire NGR SK 548 076

Roger Kipling
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Leicestershire NGR SK 548 076

Roger Kipling

For: Pro Vision Planning & Design

Approved by:

Signed: 

Date:  11.07.2013

Name:  Patrick Clay

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

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Summary

An archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared for Pro Vision Planning and Design by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in advance of planning proposals for the residential development of land at Gynsill Court, Gynsill Drive, Anstey, Leicestershire. The study has concluded that there is moderate potential for archaeological remains from the Late Iron Age or Roman periods to be present in the proposed development area and low potential for remains from other periods to be present. The application area currently consists of a large house, Gynsill Court, which will be retained, with a garden suburb scheme proposed for land to the rear of the house. Part of the proposed development area is lawn, gardens and rough paddock, and part of this will be developed and part will become formal gardens.

Introduction

This document is an archaeological desk-based assessment for land at Gynsill Court, Gynsill Lane, Anstey, Leicestershire (NGR SK 548 076). Pro Vision Planning and Design have commissioned the assessment from University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). Development proposals for the Gynsill Court site involve the open and undeveloped paddock area to the west of Gynsill Court, and to the north of remains of ornamental woodland with ponds. A garden suburb scheme has been proposed for the northern half of the area, with substantial accompanying green open areas in the adjacent area to the southwest. The Gynsill Court building itself will be retained.

The application area consists of a large Victorian lodge set with a large lawn area, car parking and a wooded and overgrown area to the west. The land slopes down towards the west. The site has recent planning history including an approved scheme for 20 residential units (16 flats, 1 detached house and 3 terraced houses) with associated parking (application no P/04/1232/2). This application was approved in June 2005 but lapsed in 2010. The scheme for additional development was never implemented as it was not deemed to be viable. Davidsons Homes have subsequently taken on the active promotion of the more extensive paddock area to the north of Gynsill Court.
Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)
Reproduced from Landranger 1:50 000 by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty’s Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495.
Figure 2: Site location plan

Figure 3: Proposed development area (original drawing supplied by the client)
Aims and Methodology

The aim of this desk-based assessment is to present information on the extent, character, date, integrity and state of preservation of archaeological deposits present within the proposed development area. The assessment will take into account all previous land uses and in addition it will aim to establish what impact future development will have on the archaeological remains. The desk-based assessment should, once the above information has been gathered, assist in providing an informed planning decision on whether further stages of work are necessary.

All work follows the Institute for Archaeologist’s (IfA) Code of Conduct and adheres to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessments.

The following sources have been consulted to assess previous land use and archaeological potential:

- Archaeological records. Historic Environment Record for Leicestershire and Rutland (HER), Leicestershire County Council
- Previous Ordnance Survey and other maps of the area (Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland).
- Geological maps (ULAS Reference Library)
- Historical background material (ULAS Reference Library and University of Leicester Library).

Location, Geology & Topography

Anstey lies c.5 miles north west of Leicester city centre. Gynsill Lane lies c.1.5 miles south of the village core and south of the A46, between the A50 and the A5630 (Figure 1). The application area lies on the western side of Gynsill Lane.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 156 (Leicester) indicates that the underlying geology is likely to be Boulder Clay.

The site slopes from c. 75m in the east to c. 70m in the west, where it flattens out considerably. The eastern part of the site has been developed, whereas the western part is largely lawn and gardens, which have been allowed to become overgrown at the far western edge.

The Archaeological and Historical Background

*Historical Background* (from Courtney and Higgins 2000; Courtney 2003; Browning and Higgins 2003)

The place-name is derived from the Old English word ‘anstiga’. This has generally been interpreted as referring to a short or narrow length of road, possibly on a slope or a hill.
(Ekwall 1960, sub Anstey). On the basis of topographic comparison, Margaret Gelling (1984 63-4) has suggested that the place – name refers more specifically to settlements on a short stretch of road with forks at either end. She also noted that many Ansteys were in elevated positions. Certainly, the Leicestershire Anstey fits both criteria.

Anstey is first recorded in the Domesday Book when it was held by one of the county’s largest landholders, Hugh de Grantemesnil, castellan of Leicester (DB, 1, 232a). The Domesday Book also records that 1 plough and 4 serfs were held by the lord, 13 villeins and 4 bordars held 2 ploughs, 8 acres of meadow and two stretches of woodland. Anstey was a chapelry of Thurcaston until 1866 when it became an independent parish (Rot. Hugh, I, 252; VCH Leics, 1, 399). Thurcaston also included the hamlet of Cropston. Both Anstey and Cropston were presumably once berewicks or manorial dependencies of Thurcaston. At the time of Domesday Book, both Thurcaston and Anstey manors were held by Hugh Grantemesnil, castellan of Leicester. Domesday (DB 1, 230a) records that Hugh had 24 burgesses in Leicester attached to Anstey.

Robert fitz Parnell, Earl of Leicester (1191-1204) granted land and four cottages in Anstey to Leicester Abbey (Augustinian). He also granted the Abbey the rights to pasture in that part of Leicester Forest lying between the roads from Leicester to Anstey and Groby (Bodl. Laud 625, fo. ivb; Rot. Chart, li.145). The latter area can be identified with the extra-parochial areas known in modern times as Anstey Pastures, Leicester Frith and Gilroes.

Leicester Abbey manor was clearly not the only estate in Anstey by the 14th century. The Ferrers family also held a manor in the west. Some of the Ferrers land was granted to Ulverscroft priory in the 1280’s and 90’s. In the late 13th century, the Cistercian abbey of Garendon was granted rent from two properties in Anstey by Margaret Ferrers. Prior to the Dissolution nearly half, if not more of the Ferrers manor in Anstey must have been in monastic hands. The Ferrers estates descended by marriage in 1445 to the Grey family (later Earls of Stamford). The Greys dwelt in Bradgate House from 1500 until 1709, after which date they dwelt permanently at Enville in Staffordshire.

The 1762 enclosure map and the 1886 OS 25 inch map (XXXI:1) suggest that there were two foci of settlement in medieval Anstey. Polyfocal villages of various forms and origins are not uncommon in the English landscape (Taylor 1977; Roberts 1987, 127-50). The earliest focus at Anstey is represented by the tenements lying to the west and east of the church in a roughly linear row settlement. However, the green at the western end of Anstey village clearly forms a second focus of settlement. The east end of Anstey must represent the Domesday village granted to Leicester Abbey. Anstey Green can be interpreted as the heart of the Ferrers/Ulverscroft manor and seems to have originated around a woodland-pasture common.

**Archaeological Background**

The Historic Environment Record provided by the Historic Natural Environment Team at Leicester County Council, shows that there are no known archaeological remains recorded from within the application area.

The following is a summary of recorded archaeological sites and finds in the vicinity of the application area. The full list is printed in the appendix.
Figure 4: Plan of known archaeological sites in the vicinity of the assessment area (marked in green)
Prehistoric

A scatter of flint objects dated to the Mesolithic has been found during field walking north of Stone Lodge (MLE7054), c. 800m west of the application area. A perforated clay slab, believed to date from the Bronze Age (MLE119) was discovered to the north of County Hall, c.450m south east of the application area.

The large visible earthwork known as the Park Pale (MLE397), which lies c.400m east of the application area may have had its origins in the Bronze Age as a triple boundary ditch.

An evaluation carried out in 1994 on a site 600m north-west of the assessment area recorded Iron Age features and artefacts, including evidence of round houses, Iron Age pottery and a struck flint. Evaluation on the site to the east in 1993 recorded a broad Iron Age ditch (MLE411). Roman remains lie nearby (see MLE413 below).

Roman

Archaeological evaluations carried out by Leicester Archaeological Unit in 1993 and 1994 (Trimble and Lucas 1993; Finn and Lucas 1994) revealed a substantial area of occupation dating from the Late Iron Age period into the Roman period (MLE413). The remains included post-holes, ditches, pits and houses and many finds including coins and brooches. This site lies on the southern side of Groby Road c.600m north west of the application area.

Metal detecting on a site along the line of the A46, 1km north-east of the site, in 1993 located two Roman brooches (MLE401).

A further Roman site lies close to the site of Gysills Hall c.400m south east of the application area (MLE117). Recent work in this area on land to the north of the County Hall car park, has revealed ditch systems and other features dated to the Roman period with substantial amounts of high quality Roman pottery (Higgins 2012 and forthcoming). Several ditches, stone spreads and a possible pit all of Roman date were found within seven of the trenches. Subsequently, a strip plan and sample excavation and watching brief undertaken in 2013 revealed further Roman features including a possible stone cobbled track way and several ditches or gullies with assemblages of Romano-British pottery.

The results of the fieldwork suggest the features are perhaps the outlying enclosures of a Romano-British settlement, with the focus possibly under pasture fields to the north. The site was probably a continuation of The Gysills Glenfield excavation located directly to the south-west. The site had similar Romano-British enclosure ditches that were excavated by BUFAU in 1998.

Medieval

The application area lies c.600m outside the medieval core of Anstey (MLE402). Few medieval remains have been recorded close to the site. The only attested medieval feature is Anstey Mill (MLE390) 500m to the north of the application area.
Park Pale, c.200m to the east of the application area is believed to be a medieval park boundary (MLE397). Archaeological work carried out by LAU in 1992 revealed evidence for further sections of the Park Pale earthwork, extending south east beyond the sections shown on Ordnance Survey maps (Finn 1992; Meek 1992).

A boundary stone, most likely early medieval in date was recorded standing at the interface of two open-field furlongs in 1981. It is a listed monument (MLE14170).

Post-Medieval

A house, owned by the Martin family on land leased from Elizabeth I existed south of Gynsill Lane (MLE389). A watermill dating to the early 19th century existed on the same site as the earlier Anstey Mill (see above) (MLE389).

The remains of a post-medieval brick kiln were found during ground-woks in 1994 to the north of Anstey Mill, 800m north-east of the assessment area (MLE395). A post-medieval gully, containing pottery was found north of County Hall, during an evaluation (MLE17268).

There are a number of post-medieval and other historic buildings located within the village core of Anstey, 1km north of the assessment area. These are largely not relevant to this assessment but are listed in the Appendix.

Undated

There are some sites of interest in the vicinity that have not been dated. These include two boundary stones, one north east of Anstey Mill (MLE394) and another north east of Mill Farm (MLE14170).

Modern

Several monuments associated with the Swannington to Leicester Railway are located in Glenfield, to the south of the application area (MLE11069, MLE11072, MLE110073).

Scheduled Monuments

The only scheduled monument in the area is the 16th-17th century packhouse bridge, which lies at The Leys in Anstey 1km north of the site. It is also Grade II* listed (MLE14171).

Conservation Areas

The nearest Conservation Area is at Anstey, 1km north of the site.
Cartographic Evidence

The enclosure map for Anstey does not show the application area, as it is well outside the village core. The present site lay in an area known as Anstey Pastures and no maps were available for this area until the first edition OS map (Figure 3).

![Figure 5: 1886 OS map of Anstey Pastures, application area highlighted](image)

The 1886 OS map of Anstey shows the application area as part of an empty field, number 159, bounded by hedges and trees. The Parliamentary County Division Boundary runs along the southern boundary.
By 1903 the field has been divided into two, 159 and 159a and the area has been partially developed, including the building which would become Gynsill Court shown as ‘West Leigh’. A group of buildings have appeared in the northern edge of the site, possibly the group of buildings now known as ‘The Mews’. Trees appear to have been planted to the rear of West Leigh.
The 1916 OS map shows a similar scene with some minor changes to the plantation to the rear of West Leigh.
The next available map is from 1957 and much of the details shown on the earlier map, such as trees are not shown. The Mews appear in a form similar to the present day, but a further building has appeared between them and the main building on the site, now re-named ‘Gynsill Court’.

Site Description
The site is concealed by large trees where it faces Gynsill Lane and is accessed via a steep tarmac drive, which winds down steeply through tall conifers, scrub and rhododendrons to a flat tarmac area and the large brick built Gynsill Court. To the north-east is a small car park and an area containing bins, which leads steeply up to a metal gate that faces Gynsill Lane. An electrical substation is located in the eastern corner of the site.

To the north of Gynsill Court are a group of small white cottages known as ‘The Mews’, served by a tarmac path, which descends to the north west of the cottages. A group of garages lie to the east of the cottages. To the west of the buildings is a large lawn that slopes to the west until it becomes virtually flat. Part of this lawn to the far south-west is upon a flat terrace and does not form part of the development area.

To the north west is a tall section of brick wall, possibly originally part of a formal garden, which separates two sections at the very western side of the application area that are overgrown with weeds. A small group of conifers and some fencing divide the overgrown areas from the well maintained lawn. The site is bounded by large deciduous trees to the north west and by open hedges to the north. To the south and south west is a low wooden fence and modern housing.

Appraisal of the Development Impact

The proposed development replaces an earlier, unimplemented scheme, detailed in an earlier desk-based assessment (Hunt 2006), and involves a more substantial area, incorporating an open and undeveloped paddock area to the west of Gynsill Court, and north of the remnants of ornamental woodland with ponds. A garden suburb scheme has been proposed for the northern half of the area, with substantial accompanying green open areas in the adjacent area to the southwest.

The construction of 49 dwellings is likely to have an impact on any underlying archaeology, if present. This is assuming that a 2-storey building would require foundations that were at least 1m deep. The areas that are to be landscaped would require methods that would be less damaging to underlying archaeology, but may have at least some impact on any buried remains.
Conclusion

The eastern side of the application area has already been largely developed and any underlying archaeology would most likely have already been destroyed, although there may be some potential in those areas only covered by asphalt. The area that may possibly have potential is the lawn area, which may have remained undeveloped since the medieval period and the area to the north of this. However, the 1957 OS map of the area shows some kind of building in this area, which may be encountered during any ground-works.

The proposed development area is situated well outside the medieval core of Anstey and some distance from known archaeological remains. There is low potential, therefore, for archaeological remains for medieval or early prehistoric remains to exist in the application area. There is moderate potential for late prehistoric or Roman material to be present, provided the areas of the site that have not been developed previously have remained relatively undisturbed.

References


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Meek, J. 1992 Archaeological Survey at Gynsill Lane, Anstey. LAU Report. Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service

Trimble, R. and Lucas, J. 1993 An Evaluation in Groby Road, Anstey for the A46 Western By-Pass LAU Report Number 93/24. Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service

Sources

LMARS Leicestershire Museums: Leicestershire Historic Environment Record
(Formerly Sites and Monuments Record), County Hall


Roger Kipling
ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel:0116 252 2836
Fax: 0116 252 2614

Email: rwk1@le.ac.uk

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Appendix: Historic Environment Record Data

The following sites in the vicinity of the application area are listed in the Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services Historic Environment Record:

MLE117. Gynsils. Grid Reference SK 549 071
Summary
Roman occupation site found by fieldwalking and subsequently extended west by excavation prior to development.
Monument/Component Types
SITE (Roman - 43 AD to 409 AD)
Find Types
SHERD (Roman - 43 AD to 409 AD)

MLE118. North of County Hall. Grid Reference SK 549 071
Summary
Several pieces of iron slag found in amongst Roman pottery during fieldwalking.
Monument/Component Types
METAL WORKING SITE? (Roman - 43 AD? to 409 AD?)

MLE119. North of County Hall. Grid Reference SK 550 070
Summary
Possible Bronze Age perforated clay slab.
Monument/Component Types
FINDSPOT (Late Bronze Age - 1000 BC to 801 BC)
Find Types
PERFORATED OBJECT (Late Bronze Age - 1000 BC to 801 BC)

MLE388. South of Gynsill Lane. Grid Reference SK 552 078
Summary
Sub-circular enclosure seen on aerial photos as dark ring. At ground level, a rough circle of irregular mounds with assorted stones.
Monument/Component Types
SUB CIRCULAR ENCLOSURE (Unknown date)

MLE389. South of Gynsill Lane. Grid Reference SK 552 078
Summary
Martin family home site from C17th AD to early C20th AD. Land leased from Elizabeth I, T. Martin bought the land from James I. House built in 1833.

**Monument/Component Types**

HOUSE (Post-medieval - 1540 AD to 1899 AD)

**MLE390. Anstey Mill.** Grid Reference SK 551 081

**Summary**

Probable watermill site first mentioned in AD1306. Current building appears C19th AD (see MLE391). Mill went out of use in AD1920s.

**Description**

There is more information in Leicestershire Watermills, p34. [1]

**Sources Reference**


**Monument/Component Types**

WATERMILL (Medieval - 1067 AD to 1539 AD)

**MLE391. Anstey Mill.** Grid Reference SK 551 081.

**Summary**

The mill was probably built in the early 19th century and was used until the early 1920s. It is on the 1880s OS map. It may be on the site of a medieval watermill (see MLE390).

**Description**

The mill was powered by a 12-13' low-breast type wheel. More information is in the Leicestershire Watermills book, p34. [1]

**Sources Reference**


**MLE394. North-east of Anstey Mill.** Grid Reference SK 552 081

**Summary**

Boundary stone standing at the interface of two open-field furlongs noted.

**Monument/Component Types**

MARKER STONE (Undated)

**MLE395. North-east of Anstey Mill.** Grid Reference SK 552 081

**Summary**

Remains of possible brick kiln site of C17th - C18th AD located. Probable brick clamp kilns found by excavation.
BRICK KILN? (Post-medieval - 1540 AD to 1899 AD)

MLE397. Old Park Pale, Gynsill Lane. Grid Reference SK 551 074

Summary
Generally considered to be a medieval park boundary, though it has been suggested that it is a prehistoric triple ditch.

Monument/Component Types
PARK PALE? (Medieval - 1067 AD? to 1539 AD?)
MULTIPLE DITCH SYSTEM? (Bronze Age - 2500 BC? to 801 BC?)

MLE413. South-west of Anstey Cemetery. Grid Reference SK 541 078

Summary
An evaluation revealed late Iron Age/Roman occupation in the form of ditches, pits, gullies, post holes and two timber round houses. Roman coins, brooches and pottery were found.

Monument/Component Types
DITCH (Late Iron Age to Late Roman - 100 BC to 409 AD)
HOUSE (Late Iron Age to Late Roman - 100 BC to 409 AD)
PIT (Late Iron Age to Late Roman - 100 BC to 409 AD)
SITE (Late Iron Age to Late Roman - 100 BC to 409 AD)

Find Types
COIN (Small quantity) (Late Roman - 250 AD to 409 AD)
BROOCH (2) (Early Roman - 43 AD to 249 AD)
SHERD (Roman - 43 AD to 409 AD)

MLE7054. North of Stone Lodge. Grid Reference SK 539 076

Summary
Tight scatter of two blade cores and three blades was found in fieldwalking.

Monument/Component Types
FINDSPOT (Mesolithic - 10000 BC to 4001 BC)

Find Types
BLADE (Mesolithic - 10000 BC to 4001 BC)
BLADE CORE (Mesolithic - 10000 BC to 4001 BC)

MLE7696. 44, Faire Road. Grid Reference SK 545 063

Summary
Roman coin found, Sestertius of Trajan.

Monument/Component Types
FINDSPOT (Early Roman - 43 AD to 249 AD)

Find Types
COIN (Early Roman - 43 AD to 249 AD)

MLE11069. TUNNEL VENTILATION SHAFT ADJACENT TO FRONT BOUNDARY OF NO 25, FAIRFIELD CRESCENT, GLENFIELD.

Grid Reference SK 549 063

Description
Ventilation shaft of tunnel for former Swannington to Leicester railway line. 1830-32. Tunnel by Robert Stephenson. Red header brick with stone coping concealed by creepers. Tapering circular shaft about 1 1/2 metres high. No. 25 is not included.

Monument/Component Types
BUILDING (Late Post-medieval - 1801 AD to 1833 AD)
RAILWAY TUNNEL (Late Post-medieval to Modern - 1832 AD to 2050 AD)

Listed Building (II) 1285/31/1/26 TUNNEL VENTILATION SHAFT ADJACENT TO FRONT BOUNDARY OF NO 25

MLE11072. TUNNEL ENTRANCE, STEPHENSON COURT, GLENFIELD

Grid Reference SK 545 064

Summary
Description Entrance to tunnel for the former Swannington to Leicester Railway. 1830-32, by Robert Stephenson. Brick retaining wall with stone parapet. Battered brick piers flank horseshoe archway which has been blocked C20 with brick and metal doors. Granite portal originally designed by Stephenson not erected because of cost. One of the earliest railway tunnels in England and, at 1,796 yards long, the longest for a long while. Opened 17th July 1832 by Stephenson's Comet. (Leicestershire Industrial History Society, An Early Railway, 1982). Tunnel closed 1966/7.

Monument/Component Types
RAILWAY TUNNEL PORTAL (Late Post-medieval to Modern - 1832 AD to 2050 AD)

Listed Building (II) 1285/31/1/31 TUNNEL ENTRANCE

MLE11073. TUNNEL VENTILATION SHAFT ADJACENT TO GARAGE OF NO. 12, TREDINGTON ROAD, GLENFIELD.

Grid Reference SK 547 064

Description

Monument/Component Types
RAILWAY TUNNEL (Late Post-medieval to Modern - 1832 AD to 2050 AD)

Listed Building (II) 1285/31/1/32 TUNNEL VENTILATION SHAFT ADJACENT TO GARAGE OF NO. 12
MLE14170. BOUNDARY STONE NORTH-EAST OF MILL FARM, GYNSILL LANE (WEST SIDE), ANSTEY.

Grid Reference SK 553 082

Description

Boundary stone, probably placed in medieval period. Stone projecting c.2m from ground, placed at point where old ridge and furrow undulations change direction. Position is c.100m from Gynsill Lane, near junction with Leicester Road.

Monument/Component Types

COMMEMORATIVE MONUMENT (Unknown date)

Listed Building (II) 286/44/6/13 BOUNDARY STONE NORTH-EAST OF MILL FARM

MLE16059. Stone Lodge.

Grid Reference SK 536 073

Summary

Geophysical survey in 2006 recorded possible bank features and ferrous objects.

Sources Reference


ELE4482 Geophysical survey report: Groby, Leicestershire (Ref: 06/00207/FUL) Stratascan

Monument/Component Types

FEATURE? (Unknown date)

MLE16076. Leicester to Swannington Railway/Midland RailwayWest Bridge branch

Grid Reference SK 52 05

Summary

The original line ran through Glenfield tunnel, which was 1 mile 36 yds long - the longest in the world at that time. When it opened in 1832 gates were installed because the locals found it too fascinating! A new line bypassed this in 1849 instead of doubling the track.

Sources Reference


Monument/Component Types

RAILWAY (Late Post-medieval to Modern - 1832 AD to 1966 AD?)
Figure 9: Location of sites recorded on the Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record of the Historic and Natural Environment Team of Leicestershire County Council. Scale 1: 15000
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