



Greyhound Inn

Main Street, Botcheston, Leicester, Leicestershire

Greyhound Inn

Main Street, Botcheston, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE9 9FF.

Archaeological Evaluation.

NGR: *SK 48270 5070*

Site code: *bot22*

Museum Accession Number: *X.A35.2023*

OASIS ID: *110archa1-515375*

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25th May 2023

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Front cover; View of development site from southeast

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out during April 2023 on land at the Greyhound Inn, Main Street, Botcheston, Leicestershire. A planning application had been approved for alterations to the Greyhound Inn public house and to erect two new dwellings with access situated to the west of the public house which was subject to trial trenching. The Leicestershire Historic Environment Record identified that the site lies within an area of archaeological potential, Roman pottery and coins were found at Snowdene Fish Farm ([mle7928](#)) to the east of the site in association with a stone well. Archaeological deposits, including structural remains, boundary features and rubbish pits, associated with the historic settlement core of Botcheston ([mle2750](#)) could also be expected to survive within the site.

The proposed development site adjoins the north side of Main Street on the eastern edge of the village where the site frontage is flat and may have been levelled more recently to provide the existing play area currently associated with the public house, that lack of a relict subsoil in this part of the site may be explained by levelling activity. There is evidence within the stratigraphy of the trench to indicate re-deposition of soil in this area of the site, particularly at the north end, perhaps carried out during the construction of the play area.

Two features were recorded at the south end of the site near the street frontage comprising a single round pit excavated for a probable recent dog burial and a post hole feature which produced a single fragment of C19 bottle glass.

In the absence of any archaeological deposits or residual finds pre-dating the C19, the evidence suggests little activity within the site before this period. Construction of the Greyhound Inn in the C19 appears to have been part of a much wider expansion of the village at this period. The evidence may suggest a smaller historic core than previously considered, the western edge of this early settlement perhaps lying further east.



Fig. 1: site location circled in red.



Fig. 2: Site location outlined in red.

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of works

This document details the results of an archaeological evaluation during 17th April 2023 at the Greyhound Inn, Main Street, Botcheston, Leicestershire, LE9 9FF. A planning application (*Planning ref. No 21/01377/FUL*) had been approved by Hinkley and Bosworth Borough Council for alterations to the Greyhound Inn public house which included a reconfiguration of the public house to form two dwellings. It was also proposed to erect two new dwellings with access situated to the west of the public house the area subject to trial trench investigation. The Leicestershire Historic Environment Record identifies that the site lies within an area of archaeological potential, Roman pottery and seven coins were found at Snowdene Fish Farm ([mle7928](#)) to the east of the site in association with a stone well, in addition archaeological deposits, including structural remains, boundary features and rubbish pits, associated with the historic settlement core of Botcheston ([mle2750](#)) can also be expected to survive within the site. An evaluation should provide sufficient archaeological information in which to assess the impact of the proposed development and if necessary to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy.

Geology and topography

Botcheston is a hamlet in the Hinckley and Bosworth district of Leicestershire about 6.5 miles (10.5km) west of Leicester. It is in the civil parish of Desford and about a mile north of the village. The proposed development area (PDA) lies within and on the western edge of the historic core of Botcheston. It comprises a roughly rectangular area amounting to approximately 690m² and is situated at approximately 103m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the underlying geology is likely to be Alluvium clay, colluvium, silt, sand, gravel (BGS, 2010). Excavation confirmed a geology of light brown clay.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL and HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

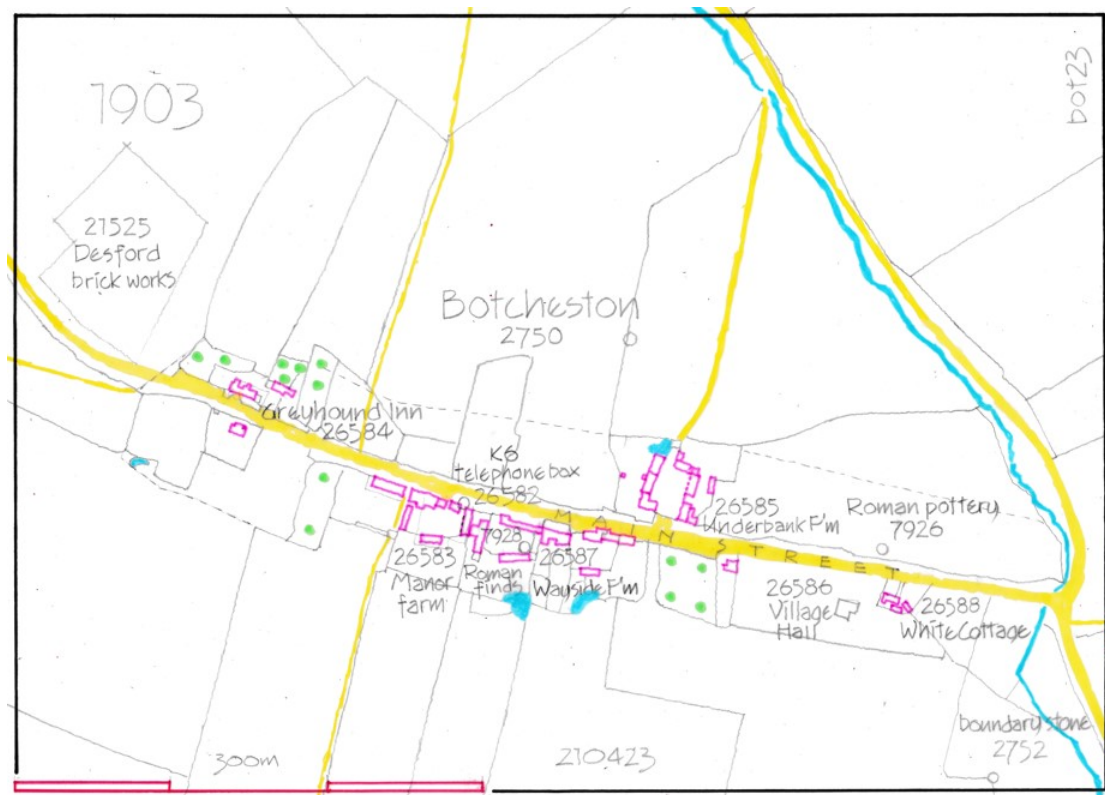


Fig. 3: Historic Environment, based on the OS 1903.

The historic medieval and post-medieval settlement core of Botcheston ([mle2750](#)) is defined using historic maps. In 1286 the village it was known as Borchardeston, Bocharð OFr, meaning male personal name and OE-tun which translates as farmstead, village, small estate. The settlement associated with Bocharð. French names are rarely found in combination with the OE tun.

The Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted with a search carried out over a 500m radius centred on the site in order to understand the archaeology. Botcheston is a hamlet in the Hinckley and Bosworth district of Leicestershire about 6.5 miles (10.5km) west of Leicester. It is in the civil parish of Desford and about a mile north of the village. The population is included in the civil parish of Desford.

The Greyhound Inn ([mle26584](#)) is thought to have been built in the early C20 and was originally likely to have been a number of cottages to house agricultural workers. It became a public house in 1856 with subsequent alterations made circa C19. It is illustrative of the social, economic and cultural development of Botcheston, providing a typical function of a small village.

Architectural interest includes, a decorative door surround, terracotta ridge tiles, gable and ridge chimney stacks, chimney pots and finials and slate tiles.

In 1958 Roman pottery and seven coins were found at Snowdene Fish Farm ([mle7928](#)) in association with a stone well. The coins dated from the C1 to the C4. Several sherds of red pottery of 'terra cotta' style, a stone well and Swithland slates. 7 Roman coins all copper alloy (Bronze). Coins 1-4 are C1/C2 sestertii, coins 5-7 are smaller coins, C3/C4.

On the north-western side of the village is Desford Brick Works ([mle21525](#)) which is adjacent to the Greyhound Inn public house shown on the late C19 OS map. The brickworks are thought to be Late Post-medieval.

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Aims of the work

The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the date, character, quality, survival and extent of the archaeological deposits within the application area likely to be threatened by the proposed development in order that an informed decision on their importance in a local, regional and national context can be made. This information would clarify whether any remains should be considered for preservation *in situ* or form the basis of a mitigation strategy.

In particular, the aims of the investigation will include:

- i) establishing the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation on the development site;
- ii) recovering artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- iii) recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

More specifically, the evaluation will investigate the potential for:

- iv) finds and/or deposits of Roman date related to (*HER ref.: mle7928*).
- v) significant medieval or post-medieval buried remains related to the early settlement of Botcheston.

Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation comprised a total of two trenches, trench 1 was 15m long aligned east-west and trench 2 was 12m long aligned north-south. Both trenches were excavated to a width of 1.80m.

Fieldwork methods and recording

The archaeological field work and post-excavation was carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2020). All deposits were excavated removing the overburden under close archaeological supervision and investigated for archaeological features. Plans and sample sections of the trenches were made and recorded during excavation.

RESULTS: GENERAL

Soil and ground conditions

Conditions were generally dry during the excavation and many of the trenches became inundated with ground water at various parts along the bottom of each trench. Excavation was relatively smooth throughout the trench being made through alternate layers of soil until the surface of the natural clay substrate was revealed in both trenches.

Reliability of field investigation

There was little evidence of truncation from more recent activity within the two excavated trenches, although some earlier levelling in the area of trench 1 is suggested by the absence of an earlier subsoil which was recorded in trench 2.

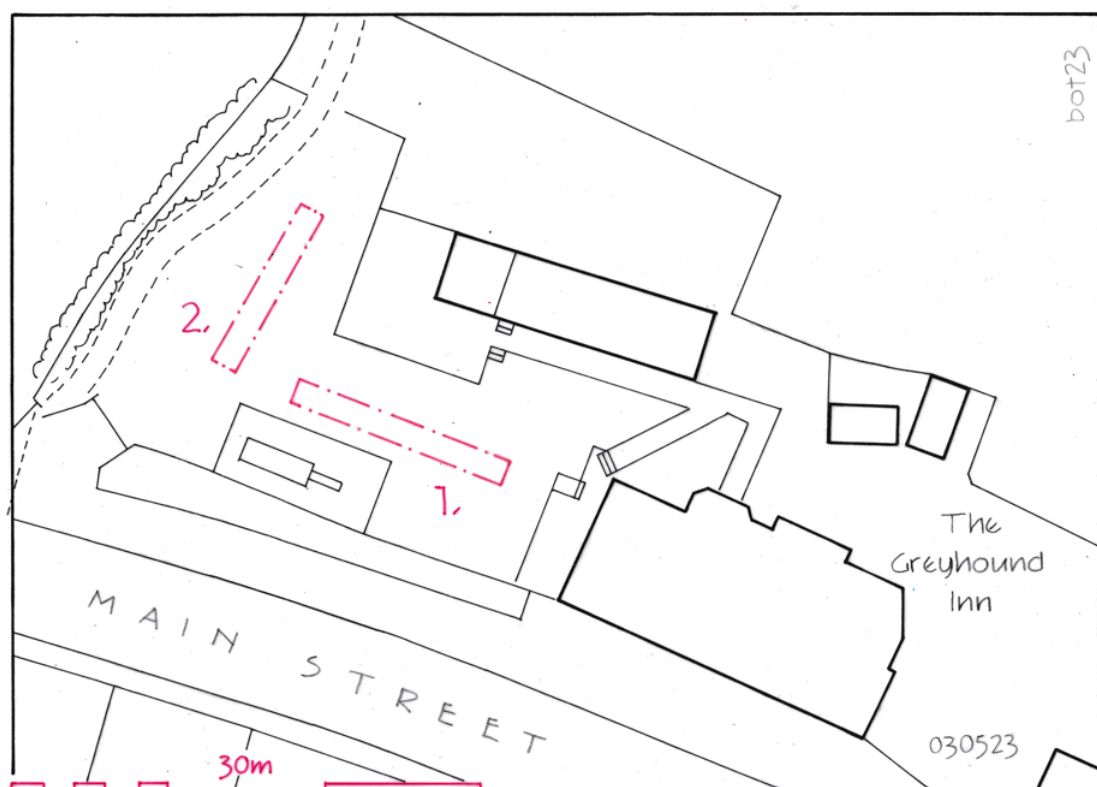


Fig.4: site plan with trench locations.

Distribution of archaeological deposits

Two features of modern date were recorded in trench 1, a single animal burial (small dog) and a former post-hole producing a single small fragment of C19 bottle glass.

Presentation of results

The results of the excavation (below) are described from the earliest to the latest deposits. Trenches were attributed context numbers with a numerical value equivalent to the number of the trench.

RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

Trenches 1 & 2

The surface of the natural substrate was reached throughout both trenches and comprised a stiff yellowish-brown clay (101 & 204). In trench 1 it was exposed at a level height of 103.84m AOD throughout its length. Truncating the surface of the clay were two features, the slightly larger of the two [103] was sub-circular, measuring 0.40m wide of the east-west axis and 0.46m wide on the north-south axis. It was up 0.10m deep and filled by a single deposit of a greyish-brown, clayey-silt, within the deposit were the skeletal remains of a small dog. The smaller feature [105] was roughly 0.36m in diameter and up to 0.15m deep, particularly on its western side. It was filled by a similar deposit (104) of greyish-brown, clayey-silt which produced a single fragment of C19 bottle glass. Sealing these features and overlying the clay throughout the trench was the modern topsoil deposit (100)

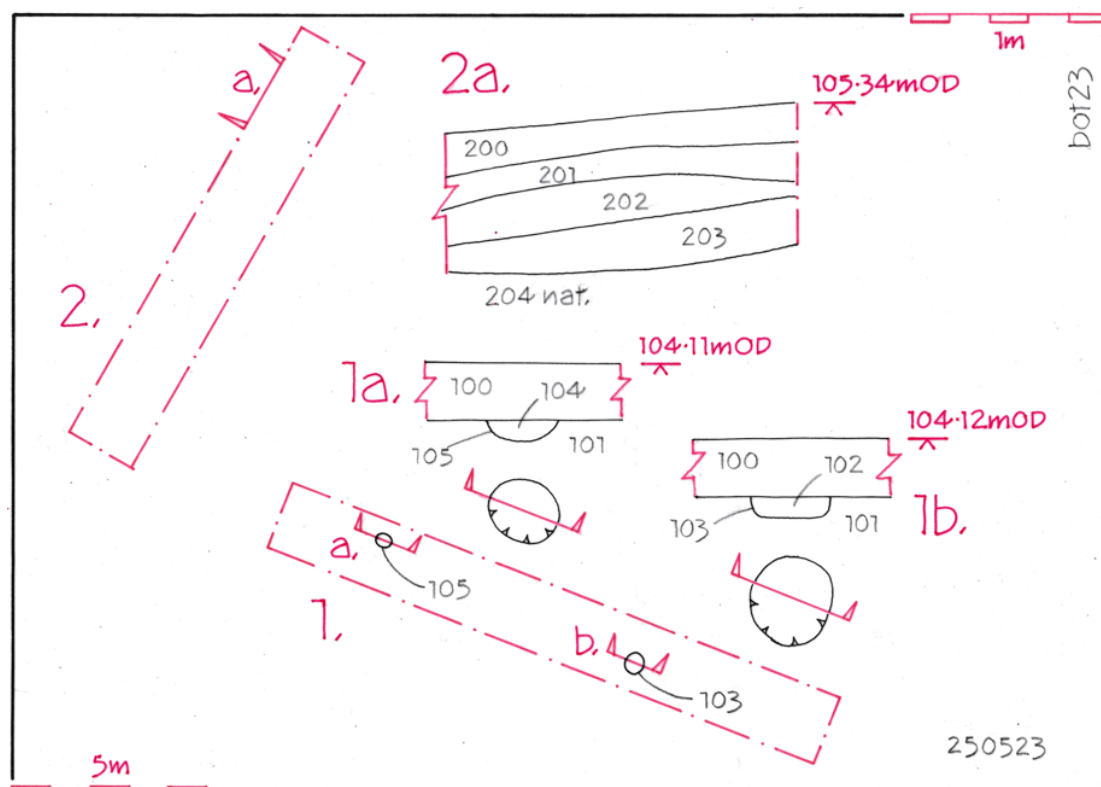


Fig.5: trench plans and sections.

Trench 2 was located on a natural slope in the site topography, the surface of the clay substrate sloped down from 104.62m AOD at the north end falling to 103.80m AOD at the south end. It was overlain throughout the trench by an undated relict subsoil deposit (203) consisting of a brown, silty-clay. The deposit was 0.22m thick at the north end of the trench tapering to about 0.05m thick at the south end. Overlying this soil layer at the south end was the modern topsoil deposit (200), at the north end of the trench this deposit (202) was buried below a sequence of modern re-deposited soil layers (201 & 200) which extended southwards along the trench for a distance of about 8.0m.

FINDS

Finds comprised a single C19 bottle glass fragment retrieved from the post hole fill deposit (104). The skeletal remains of a small dog were retrieved from the undated pit fill deposit (102). None of these finds were retained.

Environmental data

None of the deposits identified during excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

DISCUSSION

The HER shows that the Greyhound Inn lies on the western of the edge village, perhaps defining the extent of the historic medieval and post-medieval settlement core of Botcheston ([mle2750](#)) which is largely derived from historic maps. The earliest archaeological evidence of Human activity within the historic core is at Snowdene Fish Farm ([mle7928](#)) where Roman pottery and coins found in association with a stone well is a strong indication of settlement between the C1 and C4.

Much of the existing village consists predominantly of brick-built houses indicating significant expansion during the C19. On the north-western side of the

village is Desford Brick Works ([mle21525](#)) which lies adjacent to the Greyhound Inn public house and shown on the late C19 OS map.

The proposed development site adjoins the north side of Main Street on the western edge of the village and is currently mostly garden adjoining the west side of the inn. Here the site frontage is flat and may have been levelled more recently to provide the play area currently associated with the inn, that lack of a relict subsoil in this part of the site in contrast to trench 2 where it was recorded above the clay substrate throughout the length of the trench, may be explained by earlier levelling activity. Most of the land at the rear of the site rises sharply, the bottom of this steep slope was recorded within the clay substrate in trench 2. There is evidence within the stratigraphy of the trench to indicate re-deposition of soil in this area of the site, particularly at the north end, perhaps carried out during the construction of the play area.

Two features were recorded in trench 1 comprising a single round pit [103] excavated for a probable recent dog burial and a post hole feature [105] which produced a single fragment of C19 bottle glass from the fill deposit, this feature would correspond with the occupation of the site during the second half of the C19 and may be related to some aspect of land division.

In the absence of any archaeological deposits or residual finds pre-dating the C19, the evidence suggests little activity within the site before this period. Construction of the Greyhound Inn appears to have been part of a much wider expansion of the village in the C19 made the easier with a brickworks located nearby. The evidence may suggest a smaller historic core than previously considered, the western edge of the early settlement perhaps lying further east of the Greyhound Inn.

Summary of results

The investigation revealed two small features along the southern frontage of site, one was a probable C19 post hole likely associated with the occupation the Greyhound Inn and the other feature an undated dog burial pit which, given its close proximity, may also be associated with the occupation of the Inn. In trench 1, which was parallel with the road frontage, the area was flat, possibly levelled during construction of the existing play area. This might explain the absence of a relict subsoil deposit immediately overlying the clay substrate which was recorded throughout trench 2. Reposited soil layers in trench 2 may be associated with the creation of the play area.

Significance

The results suggest little human activity within the site prior to the construction of the Greyhound Inn during C19. Rather than the site representing the edge of the historic core of the settlement at Botcheston, the lack of archaeological deposits pre-dating the C19 suggests that construction of the inn was at the time when the area was undeveloped and formed part of the agricultural landscape to the west of Botcheston, development of the inn representing expansion westwards beyond the historic core. The evidence may suggest a smaller historic core than previously considered, the western edge of the early settlement perhaps lying further east of the Greyhound Inn.

Impact of development

The results of the investigation suggest that the construction of the two new houses on the west side of the Greyhound Inn will not impact on archaeological deposits.

Archive location & dissemination of the results

Following consultation with the Leicestershire Museum Service (LMS) it has been agreed with that the archive arising from the work will comprise solely of a digital archive/report that will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) via the online portal OASIS.

A summary of the results of the work will be published in the Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

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OS 1903.

PLATES



Plate 1; trench 1, view northwest.



Plate 2; trench 1 view west.



Plate 3; fill deposit (102).



Plate 4; animal burial pit [103], view north.



Plate 5; post hole fill deposit (104).



Plate 6; post hole [105], view north.



Plate 7; section 1a.



Plate 8; trench 2, view northwest.



Plate 9; section 2a, north end of trench 2.



Plate 10; section 2b, south end of trench 2.