LEICESTERSHIRE NOTES
ARCHAEOLOGY IN LEICESTERSHIRE 1953-1954

Report from the Department of Antiquities, Leicester Museums

LEICESTER. Belvoir Street
Nos. 39-41, a Georgian building, have been considerably altered for shops. It is understood that the fine doorcase of No. 41 is to be preserved. (Photographs in Museum.)

LEICESTER. Blue Boar Lane
In October the cellar of the house on the site of the old Blue Boar Inn was examined. It is of masonry with odd Roman bricks and much eighteenth-century reinforcement. It may well be part of the medieval inn.

LEICESTER. Blue Boar Lane
An excavation was carried out during the months of October and November 1953, by the Department of Antiquities, assisted by the residue of the grant made last year by the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Further, Roman remains were discovered in the road in 1907 and again in 1944 (see Appendix), and as this discovery had an outer face to the south, it was thought that, allowing for the Roman road to the north of the Jewry Wall site to continue eastwards, a cutting in the area selected would stand a chance of striking a part of the insula to the south side. This insula had already produced a considerable number of columns and lies in the centre of the Roman area.

A section was begun by Corporation workmen and continued to six feet deep throughout its length. It showed that the modern boundary wall to the north lay on a stone wall which contained fragments of church masonry and a sixteenth-century door jamb. Two pits were then sunk by the Museum staff, and both continued until they reached gravel. Dr. D. B. Harden was then consulted, and while tidying up before his arrival, it was revealed that both pits had, as their northern edge, a Roman wall about 1 ft. 6 in. in height. Subsequent work was kindly examined by Mr. Graham Webster, Curator of the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, who made a number of comments now incorporated in the succeeding paragraphs.

All the ground above the wall was honeycombed with pits, one of which contained a number of medieval cooking pots of the type now familiar from the work at St. Margaret’s church and Potters Marston (see Appendix). This pit had been sealed with clay and gravel. Most of the deeper pits were diverted to avoid the wall, and there were signs that a trench had been cut, perhaps fairly early in the Middle Ages, to rob it. The top of the wall was so smooth and identical in both cuttings that it would seem to have borne a tile course (a frequent attraction to medieval builders), or more likely a course of masonry, as there were no tile impresses left in the surface mortar.

The wall itself was built in the usual manner with local stones roughly hewn, and set in strong mortar, both faces being roughly mortared over. It was 2 ft.

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1 Year ending 31 March 1954. As in previous years, this report does not include casual finds, which are published in the Annual Report of the Museums.
2 The Committee acknowledge with gratitude permission to excavate from the Frank Gladwell Will Trust through Messrs. Bird and Bird, and the help afforded by Mr. A. K. Macareth (Surveyor’s Dept.) and Mr. J. Watson (Parks Dept.) with labour and the loan of fencing.
3 Now in the Museum, from between the Methodist Chapel and the corner of Holy Bones. Others are described in notes now in the Museum.
4 Mr. J. A. Daniell (Assistant Keeper), Mr. R. D. Abbott (Technical Assistant), and the Junior Assistants, Messrs. A. L. Benson, J. F. L. Norwood and H. J. Turner.
SECTION D-E

EARLY MEDIEVAL PIT

CLEAN GRAVEL FILL

SURFACE

GRAVEL

GREY SILT

FOUNDATION

ROMAN WALL

GRavel WITH SOME RED CLAY

BLUE BOAR LANE 1953

PLAN 2 4 6

FEET

SECTION A-C

SECTION A-B

Fig. 1.
10 in. thick. At 2 ft. 6 in. from its top it widened into a little plinth and below this plinth was another 50 in. of course foundation, of the same material but not so well mortared.

There was no sign of a foundation trench, so apparently the entire primary cutting had been filled. The construction of the foundation had cut through a cobbled area which was about 3 ft. 6 in. thick and lay in the natural earth, which is gravelly sand with some red clay. Over these cobbles was a layer of fine grey sandy silt, also cut through by the wall, and above that nearly three feet of gravel, put down in layers. It would be reasonable to assume that this gravel was an outdoor area.

While no definite conclusions can be drawn, it is clear that the wall was intended to carry a heavy superstructure. It was later than the cobbled area through which it had been cut, and there had been time for the clean layer of silt to be deposited on the cobbles before the wall was made. Subsequently successive resurfacings had raised the gravel up to the face of the wall, and finally a trench had been cut to rob the masonry or tiles, and medieval pits were later dug down to the wall, which in some cases seems to have deterred further progress.

It is now desirable that a north-south section should be cut, reaching to the road. The whole operation was intended primarily as a reconnaissance, and has therefore succeeded in its object, not least since, apart from the Jewry Wall and the Sankey Gate excavations, this is the first time that some structural remains have been found in Leicester as a result of deliberate excavation.

APPENDIX I. FINDS

Roman

The only piece of any merit was a graffito (Fig. 2) incised on the shoulder of a ring-necked jug of white ware.

![Fig. 2.](image)

It may be read ...

| Fig. 2. | FLATVA |

The last letter seems to be A, not R. A feminine name ending in —flativa is reasonable, whereas a verb flatur is unlikely in this context.

I am indebted to Mr. R. P. Wright for this note.

Medieval (Fig. 3)


5 See Jewry Wall Report, 10. I am indebted to Mr. F. Cottrill for pointing this out.
Fig. 3.
7. Rim and side of cooking-pot. Rim makes sharp angle with shoulder. The outer edge of the rim is turned over and shaped into a wavy line as rough decoration. Diam. 0.184.

All these were found together in a pit above the wall.

APPENDIX II. FORMER DISCOVERIES IN BLUE BOAR LANE

Sept. 1859. Wall found running in same direction as street, 5 ft. deep and at least 6 ft. high and 6 ft. long. At one end a column Ht. 33 in., Circumference 68½ in. (i.e. Diam. about 22 in.). At the other another Ht. 25 in., Diam. 17 in., no plinth. Both millstone grit.6

Some carved impost mouldings, etc., from corner of Highcross Street and Blue Boar Lane.7

June 1907. A column Ht. 19 in., Diam. 18 in. on plinth 24 in. square. 12 ft. deep.8

Photographs, plan and column in Museum. This plan also shows wall 5 ft. thick projecting from south corner adjoining site of Blue Boar Inn, and wall 3 ft. 6 in. thick on the same line as fragment found in 1944.

Jan. 1944. In a hole cut in the south side of the street and approximately 158 ft. from the Highcross Street frontage, a Roman wall of rubble masonry with three brick courses at the top. Its south face was located just below the present curb, and it was at least 3 ft. 6 in. thick and 2 ft. 5 in. high as excavated. It had been broken through in modern times.

Found by F. Cottrill. Note and plan in Museum.

LEICESTER. The Guildhall

During December 1953 and January 1954 the carved overmantel in the Mayor's Parlour at the Guidhall was stripped of its many layers of paint in order to restore the original colour scheme, first referred to in the Chamberlain's Accounts for 1636-7:9 "putting the said chimney piece into cullors and guilding the same". The work was carried out by G. H. Naylor and W. W. Johnson of the Corporation Works Dept. under the supervision of Mr. J. A. Daniell and Mr. D. T.-D. Clarke.

Four main periods of painting were discerned:

Period I. 1637. The relief-work only had been painted in naturalistic colours, the background being left plain. This had been covered entirely with a coat of white and a coat of brown in Period II which we attribute to the Commonwealth. Payment was made "for scowring the Chimney peece" in 1651-2.10

Period III. The overmantel was presumably repainted at the Restoration, but the next work that can be distinguished seems to be of the reign of Queen Anne, whose initials appear on the centre panel. These initials had been repainted in 1786, as they were all of the same style with this date and the initials G.III. R. in the right-hand panel. The left-hand panel bore the letters C. R. and the centre one A. R. in larger size. It is probable that the Borough Arms on the centre panel were carved in the late seventeenth century. They are not only

7 F. J. Haverfield, Roman Leicester, 35 (10b).
8 V.C.H. Leics., i. 192, Pl. II.
9 Records of the Borough of Leicester, ed. Bateson and Stocks, iv. 293.
10 ibid., iv. 412.
of a different style of carving from that of the earlier work, but they overlie the painted surface. Possibly when the accession of William III and Mary II necessitated a change of Royal Arms, it was felt desirable to make a less volatile central ornament. The backgrounds were painted red (bases of columns, etc.) and blue (carved panels) and the masks, etc., white and gold.

Minor repaintings were done in the eighteenth century, as is shown by the initials A. R. overlying an earlier letter terminating in a gold flourish, and the date 1702 in yellow overlying the same date in a different style in gold (bottom of centre panel).

Period IV dates from the Regency, when the smaller fireplace was inserted in Swithland slate slabs covered with a simple classical ornament carved in deal. Detailed drawings of this scheme, which was in pale blue, white and gold, were made by Mr. G. H. Shepherd of the College of Art, and are now in the Museum.

Period V can be dated to the later nineteenth century when the entire carved surface was covered with a brown stained paint of some thickness and a few projecting surfaces gilded.

This galaxy has compelled a total repainting of the woodwork, as it would be quite impossible to strip the background down to a natural light oak. We have therefore preferred Period III except for the masks and raised panels, which are as Period I. The utmost care has been taken to match the colours, and the many initials have been painted over, not scraped off. Unfortunately, the two side columns at the bottom had been so stripped and burned as to bear no traces of an original scheme and on these, therefore, we have had to use our own discretion. The restorer's task is never an easy one, but we hope we have at least offered to the future an artistic unity which does justice to the original artist.

During the year the Mace Stand was also stripped by Mr. Daniell, a task requiring several months' work. It bore two metal plates with the cyphers of Queen Victoria (Mus. No. OS 213. 1951) and under the initials of George III and Queen Anne the original decoration of 1586 (it included the date) was exposed. It consists of a simple yellow spray on a dark green background. The initials are gold on red. This design was carefully restored by Mr. Shepherd. The modern deal restorations have been tinted to match the old scheme.

LEICESTER, The Newarke Houses Museum

Recent reconstruction work on the Newarke Houses Museum has led to the revelation of a number of details of the history of the house.

The original house consisted of a rectangle of what is now the hall and the rooms on either side, with a stair turret at the back, like that still in existence in the Chantry House. This house had two upper floors and was built of rubble containing fragments of carved and moulded stone, two of which have been incorporated in the terrace in the garden. The windows had stone mullions and transoms with oak beams above, and they and the fireplaces were reinforced with brick arches built into the rubble above the lintels.

Originally the ground level was rather lower than at present, for in the cellar the massive rubble wall still contains the base of a window. Traces of the east window are said to have been visible in the Panelled Room on the ground floor and its counterpart on the first floor has been exposed and restored, though the wall cupboard on either side, originally lined with oak, had to be blocked up. There was also a cupboard and window to the east of the fireplace in the north wall of this room (and one below, behind the present panelling).

The west window on the first floor was fragmentary and had to be blocked. Fragments of that on the second floor are visible externally and the east window on this floor was discovered and blocked for security during the reconstruction.

On the second floor the partitions were all removed and the plaster floors, rush-laid, were stripped out and a new pre-cast concrete floor resting on steel girders, in turn resting on wall plates, was inserted. Two small stone fireplaces were revealed, and also the entrance-jamb of the stair-turret. The huge oak beams were in shocking condition with dry rot and death-watch beetle, and this method, though drastic, has now bonded the entire fabric at the top, a necessary precaution as there was a four-inch crack in the west wall. A new staircase has been inserted.
PLATE I

a. ROMAN FOUNDATION—BLUE BOAR LANE, 1953

Leicester Museum

b. CROPSTON PUMPING STATION, 1870
On the first floor three doorways in the west wall were blocked, and a new one made, and the panelling of the western room was re-erected to conform with this and the discovery of the original fireplace, which is off-centre to the west, and had been replaced by a nineteenth-century one in the centre of the wall. Unfortunately the ornamental ceiling with its central rose and foliate border had to be destroyed, but on the back of the panelling was found the following inscription:

"This Wainscoting was repaired and new Ceiling the Panels Painted White and Mouldings Gilt and a new Door Chimney Piece and Grate by One Plaister Hull and Pollard Harley Mason Oldfield Painter & Gilder Farley Architect and Wm Godrich and George Jackson Joiners. This Panel put in on Good Friday March 28th 1823 and ........ by Mr. Leach Barchelder Aged 22."

This scheme has now been faithfully carried out, and the board preserved, while the present work has been similarly commemorated. An eighteenth-century 18 in. brick wall between this room and the room above the hall has been removed and a partition substituted. The partition between this central room and that to the east also contained three blocked doors and was composed of oak uprights with the original plaster still in place, as hard as marble, but the wood was too rotten to preserve. The earliest door, its jambs painted dark green, was some 5 ft. 6 in. high and very narrow. It must have been the original Tudor one. In the east room the fireplace was exposed and the original white plaster above it.

Returning to the history of the house, an annexe was built shortly after its construction on its west end, of which the original fireplace survives on the first floor, though that on the ground floor has been totally destroyed and is now blocked. The present stair, though of later seventeenth-century origin, is not in situ, as can be seen from the ill-fitting hand-rail. None the less it may well have begun its life in the house. A small back stair to the second floor was removed in the earlier restorations to this wing, which unfortunately isolated a long narrow room above the stairs, now only to be approached through the skylight of the back corridor.

In 1761, when the house was bought by William Wright, there was an extensive restoration and the present central stair was built. The Chantry House was now, or maybe a little earlier, incorporated in the complex, and there was a flagged corridor through what is now the laboratory into it.

In the early nineteenth century the east wing was built with its two bay-windows on the garden side and vaulted plaster ceilings in the present south wing and bathroom on the first floor. The iron staircase in this wing was stripped and redecorated in black with gold swans according to the original scheme as revealed by cleaning. Finally the north wing was built into the garden about 1928.

In the western bay-windowed room on the ground floor it has been necessary to build a steel rectangle to support the wall above the bay, and to empty and cover two rain-water cisterns found below the foundations. The central stair has been reinforced with "Z" girders and minor strengthening carried out on various other parts of the building.

It is difficult now to assign every door or blocking to the various periods of division or unity of the house, for it has been successively one, two, three and again one building. The restoration has therefore had of necessity to be arbitrary at times, but it has been carried out with great sympathy by Mr. K. Palmer, Deputy City Architect, in consultation with the Museum authorities.

LEICESTER. The Newarke

During excavations for a post at Coronation time (June 1953) the passage recorded in 1899 was broken into at the N.E. corner of the old St. Mary’s Vicarage. I crawled along it as far as possible, and found it exactly as described therein. There is no doubt that it was a drain, and it is probably to be dated to the fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

LEICESTER. The Newarke, St. Mary’s Vicarage

The chimney at the north end of this building having been for some time in danger of splitting away, it was rebuilt in brick in early October. (Photograph in Museum.)

LEICESTER. Drinking Fountain from the Cross

This has been in the Slater Street yard of the Corporation since the making of Charles Street. It was recently offered to the Museum, but after careful consideration it was felt not to be of sufficient interest or beauty to justify the high cost of its removal and re-erection. It has now been destroyed. (Photographs in Museum.)

Details: Height, 8 ft. 3 in. plus iron spike on top about 5 ft. long. Triangular base each side 3 ft. 9 in.

It has a six-sided carved canopy. The base is inscribed:

(a) This Fountain is given to the Town Council, James F. Hollings, Esq., Mayor.
(b) Gratuitously supplied with water by the Leicester Waterworks Company.
(c) Dedicated to the service of the people of Leicester and placed under their protection. January 1860.

BELGRAVE 596076

The Old Cottage in Bath Lane, which had mud walls and a thatched roof, probably the last mud building in the City, was destroyed. We were too late to obtain any details of its construction. (Old photograph in Museum.)

BELTON 451200

Casual finds on the moated site included one small piece of black Roman pottery with burnished decoration and some eighteenth-century ware. The site has been scheduled, and the Ministry suggest it may date from the Dark Ages. (Private possession, letter in Museum.)

BITTESBY 496856

Approximately ¼ mile north of Willey Railway Crossing on the west side of the Watling Street, a skeleton about 2 feet deep and lying parallel to the road was disturbed by an excavator. No evidence of date. (Copy of police constable’s report in Museum.)

BOSWORTH FIELD 402000

The stone pyramid over King Dick’s Well having fallen into disrepair, the Society approached Mrs. Wynn, the present owner, who generously undertook its restoration. We record this public-spirited action with gratitude.

CASTLE DONINGTON 447273

A request for a faculty to remove the Stanton altar-tomb and brass in the south aisle of the church has provisionally been declined pending further information. It is doubtful whether this fine and delicate monument would stand such action without serious damage.

CROFT 503967

Four sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery of coarse black, slightly burnished ware have been found in the sand-pit. There are a useful link in the distribution of Anglian settlement in the county. (On loan to the Museum by Mr. Eric Pochin. Drawings in Museum.)

CROPSTON 550114

The steam pumping machinery at the reservoir is being replaced by an electrical installation. The two engines are of the rotative beam type and were manufactured by Messrs. Neilson Bros. of Glasgow. They were installed by the old Leicester Waterworks Company in 1870, and are fine examples of the heavy engineering design of the period, including Tuscan columns. Their size precluded any hope of preservation, but an adequate photographic record has been made by Leicester Museum, where the original working drawings are to be deposited by the generosity of the Corporation Water Dept. (Plate 1b.)

GOADBY MARWOOD 778267

Towards the end of 1952 unmistakeable traces of Roman settlement began to appear in the ironstone workings to the north of the village. A hoard of over 2,000 coins was unearthed on 20 Feb. 1953, and preserved through the co-operation of the Foreman, Mr. E. Coy, and the fortunate arrival, at the exact moment of discovery, of Mr. R. D. Abbott of Leicester Museum. The coins were of late third-
century date and are now being cleaned and listed in Leicester Museum. The site has since been under observation and much pottery and some small finds have been recovered. A feature of it is the large number of stone-lined pits some cut deep into the rock, no less than eleven of these having been so far recorded.

HUMBERSTONE 623060

The Tithe Barn, a brick and timber building with a slate roof of the early seventeenth-century, has long been in a poor state of repair. After representations by the Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Sheffield Regional Hospitals Board, to whom it belongs, have undertaken its repair. (Photographs in Museum.)

KIRKBY MALLORY 455018

"The Moats" has been partly levelled. Its plan is not given in V.C.H or O.S. 6". (Sketch-plan and letter from Mr. D. J. Bott in Museum.)

QUENIBOROUGH 648121

A coin hoard is said to have been discovered during work in the main street in 1951 or 1952 and dispersed by the workmen without trace. An associated object appears from its description to have been a Saxon escutcheon, and may yet be located. If the report is true (and we have it from an eye-witness) it is a scandalous reflection upon public ignorance and apathy to the importance of such material for local history. (Correspondence in Museum.)

ROTHLEY 584127

Two cottages in North Street which stood to the west of the village green were demolished in 1953. The cottage on the north was of cruck construction, probably dating from c. 1500 or earlier. That on the south with the large stone chimney-stack was of timber-framed construction on a stone foundation and might be dated to the second half of the sixteenth century. There were no striking fittings. (Photographs and corner-cupboard in Museum.)

STAUNTON HAROLD 380209

The restoration of the fabric of the church is now largely complete, thanks to a generous grant from the Pilgrim Trust. The interior has been plastered and the exterior repointed and made weatherproof. A further sum is needed to re-hang the bells, repair the floor, and restore the banners and the original clear glass. The work has been supervised by Louis Osman, B.A. (Arch.), F.R.I.B.A. On 28 September the tercentenary of the foundation was observed, the sermon being preached by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The building has now been vested in the National Trust by Earl Ferrers. Much concern is however felt for the Hall, one of the few fine houses surviving in the county, and an essential part of the Staunton scene. It is now fast becoming derelict. (Records and photographs in Museum.)

LEICESTERSHIRE RECORD OFFICE

During the year ending 31 March 1954 the County Record Office has received the following deposits:

I. PARISH RECORDS (CIVIL)

(a) Anstey
   (i) Account Books—Anstey Town Book, 1763-1785; Overseers of the Poor, 1749-1837; Overseers of the Highways, 1790-1820; Heard's Charity, 1806-1850.
   (ii) Levy Books—Overseers of the Poor, 1777-1819; Churchwardens, 1784-1826.