LEICESTERSHIRE NOTES

ARCHÄOLOGY IN LEICESTERSHIRE 1956-1957

Report from the Department of Antiquities, Leicester Museums

(Year ending 31 March 1957. This report does not include casual finds, which are recorded in the Annual Report of the Museums. Thanks are due to Messrs. R. J. Abbott, G. R. Lee, and V. R. Webster for notes and Messrs. R. D. Abbott, J. A. Daniell, A. L. Benson and H. J. Turner for work in the field.)

LEICESTER. SLUM CLEARANCE

Large areas around Wharf Street, East Street and Bonners Lane are being demolished. Much consists of small early and mid 19th-cent. cottages in terraces, but on the corner of Bonners Lane and Oxford Street some Georgian and earlier buildings were destroyed. (Pl. II.) Photographs are in the Museum.

Fig. 1

LEICESTER. BELGRAVE GATE

Nos. 36 to 40 were demolished. Both had 18th-cent. frontages, but behind were portions of a house of timber which might be dated to the early 16th cent. One tie beam had a small shield in the centre (fig. 1) and deep mouldings. There was also a braced corner and part of a roof truss.

Excavations for new foundations exposed a large fragment of a dry stone wall some 3 ft. thick, 9 ft. deep and 15 yards from the building line. It appeared to be part of a right-angle lying at 45 deg. to the street. It seems to be Roman, not least since the cinema is believed to stand on a Roman mosaic, which was secretly destroyed at the time of building.

Casual finds of Roman pottery included part of a jar of orange fabric with a face applied in barbotine, and the base of Samian form 33 stamped OF NGRI by NIGER of Banassac and La Graufesenque, period Claudius-Vespasian.
LEICESTER CASTLE

The Swithland slates on the roof of the Hall have been re-laid, and the unsightly ventilators removed. New slate was obtained from the demolitions in the Wharf Street area. The Clerk to the County Council kindly invited the Society to examine the exposed roof, but no features of interest were observed.

LEICESTER. FREESCHOOL LANE

In early May 1956 work on the foundations for a new building for the Co-operative Society's stores required the excavation of the open court at the rear of their premises and the sinking of stanchion holes for the new structure. Some 6 ft. of overburden was removed and 4 wells were found at the base of stanchion holes. It is likely therefore that there were others.

Each well was about 5 ft. in diameter, cut in the natural clay without lining other than possible puddling with what the workmen asserted might be cow-dung. The depths of the shafts varied from 9 ft. to 15 ft.

The main well, when found, was 12 ft. deep and 4 ft. 3 in. in diameter. (Pl. IIIa.) The top then lay about 10-12 ft. below the present surface, so its original depth must have been a good 18 ft. At the bottom were some remains of timber work, though the natural was never wholly reached. It had finally been plugged with gravel and the sides of the upper part had fallen in. The contents of this well included a column capital of Norman style (Pl. IIIb) and some 12th-cent. pots. On the same site were 7 small pits of various sizes, 3 of which contained only Roman material and 3 both Roman and medieval. Near the main well was a brick-lined well of the 19th cent.

The Department is grateful to the Co-operative Society and their contractors for their interest and help in this work.

Finds

Roman: Much pottery and glass, a bronze brooch (Collingwood type Q) and Samian form 18 stamped OF SECVDNI by SECVDVNS of La Graufesenque, period Claudius-Vespasian.

Medieval: Some good sherds of 12th-cent. pottery, and 5 cooking pots of coarse grey clay, 1 with bevelled rims, 1 with a flanged rim and 1 with a flat rim and wavy incised decoration. These are so like those from St. Margaret's already published (T.L.A.S., xxviii. 34) and in the Jewry Wall report (fig. 66) that illustrations are omitted.

There was also the major part of a green-glazed roof-tile and the base of a pitcher of white clay and clear green glaze with incised decoration.

One casual find was a sherd of green glazed pitcher with a dog in relief.

LEICESTER. HORSEFAIR STREET

Throughout the year controversy has raged over the proposed demolition of the Theatre Royal, which was agreed to by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, although listed as worthy of preservation. Built in 1836 by William Parsons, the theatre is amongst the oldest of those still in use in England. If it is demolished an obituary will be prepared for next year's volume.

LEICESTER. ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH

Mr. Alec T. White has carved a bishop's head as a dripstone to the left side of the vestry door in the chancel.

LEICESTER. VINE STREET

The building of a new factory on the E. side of the N. end of Vine Street exposed over 9 skeletons lying E. and W. at a depth of about 4 ft. 6 in. In the circumstances they may be presumed medieval in date. (Plan in Leic. Mus.)

Finds

A sherd of Samian form 33 stamped CAPILLIANI by CAPILLIANVS of Lezoux, period Antonine, was found on this site.
PLATE II

LEICESTER: BONNERS LANE

Eighteenth-century buildings, demolished 1957
(a) LEICESTER: FREESCHOOL LANE
Medieval well

(b) LEICESTER: FREESCHOOL LANE
Norman capital from well
LEICESTER. WELLES STREET

The erection of an electricity sub-station below Mackeson's (formerly Whitbread's) brewery revealed a number of medieval pits and some important pottery.

Finds

Coins of Vespasian (71 A.D.), Mattingly and Sydenham No. 502, Claudius II (268-270 A.D.) and Maximianus (285-305 A.D.). All these were returned to the finder.

Roman: Shale bracelet, D. 0.07 m.
Samian bases of form 33 PATERNVS of PATERNVS of Lezoux, Trajan-Antonine, and one which seems to read DOCIO:F form 27, which has not yet been traced.
Two mortarium stamps (fig. 2) by ARRO and CLEMES.

Medieval: A good selection of early medieval cooking pots and pitchers, some illustrated in fig. 3. They are all of soft gritty ware, with white imperfections and are similar to the pot illustrated in T.L.A.S. xxviii, fig. 6. 1. No. 5, a cresset, is rather harder and may be later in date.

Fig. 2 (½)

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No further monuments have been scheduled this year.

ANSTEY. 550085

At the end of Jan. 1957 demolition of a pair of cruck-framed cottages known as 12 Bradgate Road, Anstey, approached completion. A halt was however called after the roof and walls had been stripped as far as was practicable, in order that an examination of the timber structure could be made. (Pl. IVa.) Unfortunately in later years a corrugated iron roof had been built over the old thatch and the later rafters rather marred the outline of the structure. At the time of demolition there were three bays of building facing the street. It stood on a terrace raised 2 ft. 3 in. above the pavement level and was entered from the street up a flight of 4 steps. As usual much featureless alteration had taken place and the rubble plinth was surmounted by a brick side wall which adopted a suitable “wavy” line in order to fit the contours of the timber frame. In some cases doors and windows may have borne little relation to those in the original structure while the N.E. end wall was entirely of stone. Though obviously very old, it is questionable whether it was the original wall as the first cruck truss bore number II. The first bay was 16 ft. 6 in. long and cruck truss II had had the foot removed and rested embedded in a brick partition wall of later date. Up against this wall was the site of a bake oven. At this point the building was 16 ft. wide.

The next bay was 15 ft. long with crucks III resting on a floor level raised by 17 in. at this point. The third bay was a little shorter still, viz. 14 ft. 5 in. and the third cruck truss, embodied in the S. W. end wall, was only 15 ft. wide. At the extremity of this bay was a curious raised brick platform 8 in. above general level and measuring 8 ft. by 12 ft., the 12 ft. side fitting flush against the end wall and the rear wall. At the rear of this bay, by the foot of cruck III were the remains of a winding staircase.

The S.W. end wall was obviously originally an interior partition and incorporated a filled-in door and a good specimen of wattle and daub work. The cruck truss at this end had unusual features. In the first place it was not numbered (visibly at any rate). It was also not so tall as the others and the rather elbow-shaped timbers were at the top mortised into a saddle 4 ft. 6 in. long which surmounted them and which supported an upright post about 3 ft. high on which the ridge pole rested. Furthermore the tie beam and collar beam were affixed to the far side of this truss; that is, the opposite side from similar timbers on crucks II and III. Beyond the S.W. end wall there is a modern entrance and gateway. The next building clearly shows the roof line of an intervening building, now demolished, so that it is possible that the line of cruck building continued for yet another bay. The last-mentioned cruck, with all its varying features of construction, may have formed part of an adjoining building of slightly different date. In support of this theory it may be noted that a curious timber bracket was pegged to the far side of the saddle of this truss. This may have supported a feature of an adjoining structure.

It is noteworthy that in this building the tie beams, 8 ft. above ground level, did not support the wall plates. These rested upon the tops of uprights, 10 ft. high, which were framed on to the foot of each cruck and pegged to the ends of the tie beams.

The majority of the windbraces were curved and were pegged one on top of the other, whereas the usual procedure was for one to be placed lower down the cruck than the other one. The main crucks were of 11 in. by 10 in. section with tie beams 8½ in. deep and 5½ in. to 6 in. thick. This thickness was halved and a corresponding portion cut away from the crucks in order to secure a flush join. Securing pegs were of oak 1 in. diameter, 2 being used on tie beams at 7 in. centres.

Framed into the structure of cruck II was a complete doorway of the upper floor which showed clearly how, while resting on the tie beam, the latter was cut away in order to ensure adequate head room. The top of the door was incorporated into a collar beam which in its turn supported brick and clay work belonging to the upper part of the chimney stack of the oven on the ground floor.

Special thanks are due to Messrs. H. Roberts Ltd. for controlling the demolition to allow records to be made. A full survey was also carried out by the National Buildings Record. The door knocker is in the Newarke Houses Museum.

V.R.W.
LEICESTERSHIRE NOTES

BELTON. 447208
The chalice, c. 1580, has been rediscovered "in storage in the Vicarage".  
(Loughborough Echo, 24 Aug. 1956.)

BESCABY. 822661
Part of the deserted medieval village was ploughed out. The stone foundations of
two or three small houses were observed, but they were much scattered, and no
pottery was found on the surface.

BOSWORTH FIELD. 407005
A scheme is being prepared to erect a small memorial by the roadside to mark
the site of the battle.

BOTTESFORD. 802395
Boys from Bottesford Church of England School found fragments of Roman pottery
and a bone comb in the north bank of the stream. The ground has been much
made up, and it appears to have contained rubbish pits. Mr. L. S. Dewey, Head­
master, has preserved the finds.

BREEDON. 405234
The transfer of the north aisle from Lord Ferrers to the parish is now in hand.
About £750 will be needed to repair the vault and walls. The condition of the
Anglo-Saxon carvings is causing some concern, and an expert report is being sought.

BURBAGE. 441923
No. 44 Windsor Street was recently demolished. In the kitchen was a beam with
the inscription W. E. B. 1680. It was said to have been a cruck but this could not
be verified.

CADEBY. 425023
A demolition order has been confirmed on Church Cottage, a cruck building with
18th-cent. additions. It is hoped to record it and rescue certain fittings if it is
destroyed. Thanks are due to the Market Bosworth R.D.C. for information of
developments.

COALVILLE. 448144
In digging a gas main in Blackwood Road a small bronze coin of Constantine I
was found. It is hoped it may be presented to Leicester Museum.

COALVILLE. 428143
The stone nameplate of Coalville Place at the end of Club Row has been accepted
by the Coalville U.D.C. from the National Coal Board, but no site has yet been
found for it.  
(Coalville Times, 10 May 1957.)

EATON. 798282
A report was received from Mr. E. Coy of the Eastwell Iron Ore Company that
wells were being found in ironstone workings at Eaton, and the site was visited
on 9 July 1956. One well was exposed in the face of the quarry and had been split
from the top by the excavator for a depth of 15 ft. The general architectural
characteristics were similar to those of the numerous wells found at Goadby
Marwood some 2 m. to the S., but whereas the majority of the Goadby wells had
been constructed from carefully-dressed blocks of limestone and ironstone, the
lining of the Eaton well was of undressed blocks of ironstone packed tightly with
clay. Below 9 ft., where the seam of natural ironstone commences, the shaft was
driven through the rock and lined with puddled clay. The shaft was 1 ft. 3 in. wide
at the top, circular and descending vertically for 3 ft. when the diameter was
increased gradually until a maximum of 3 ft. 2 in. was reached at 9 ft. from the
surface. No pottery attributable to the fill was found, though a number of sherd
were found among the spoil from the immediate vicinity of the mouth of the well.
These were all of Roman date and it seems reasonable to assume that the well is
of that period and like those at Goadby Marwood associated with the Roman
exploitation of the ironstone.

A second well (796282) lay some 60 yds. to the W. in the bank by the road
bridge over the quarry railway. This had been dug out for a depth of some 10 ft.
and in construction was composed of dressed stones similar to those at Goadby
Marwood. This well is not likely to be destroyed during the present quarrying
operations,  
Drawing and photographs in Leic. Mus.  
R.D.A.
FRISBY-ON-THE-WREAK. 697171

The lower part of the shaft of the Stump Cross on the Leicester-Melton road was found by Mrs. M. B. Douglas, who, following a local tradition, excavated in the entrance to the nearby gateway. The Leicestershire County Council have undertaken to care for this scheduled monument, provided it is restored to the satisfaction of the Ministry of Works. Mrs. Douglas has kindly offered to contribute to this restoration.

HIGH CROSS. 467893

An aerial photograph has shown traces of what seems to be a hengiform site in a field to the east of the Watling Street. 

HUGGLESCOTE. 423123

The Ranger’s Cottage. (Pl. IVb and V.) This small thatched cottage had long been believed to be of medieval date. It was purchased by the late Mr. E. M. Orton with the intention of preserving it, and it was offered by his executor, Mrs. J. A. Allen, to Leicester Museums, since the site was required for road widening. It was hoped that it would be possible to remove the building piecemeal and re-erect it on a new site and hence it was demolished systematically. The cottage was built of rubble stone walls with a thatched roof, and a brick annex had been added to the northern end in 1913. It measured 32 ft. by 18 ft. and the walls were about 6 ft. high. When the thatch had been removed the roof was seen to be made in two parts. It seemed likely that the southern end had been added at a later date, but there was no evidence for this in the walls. The floors were all excavated and a drain, made of rough stones, was found beneath, whence apparently the local tradition that a spring flowed under the house. No dating evidence was found but there was no pottery earlier than the 18th cent. and a sherd of an 18th-cent. brown glazed bowl was found in the drain. The roof was simply constructed with a central beam and rafters supporting it.

The date therefore remains a mystery and has been placed on good authority as late as the 18th century. Nevertheless the roughness of the timberwork would allow it to be earlier and 16th to 17th-cent. origin would seem to be more probable.

A full record of every stage of demolition was made, with drawings and photographs now in Leic. Mus.

HUGGLESCOTE. 427126

Material from the old church was used to make:
1. A wall at the rear of the Castle Inn.  2. A buttress opposite the Old Gate Inn.  3. The wall on the west side of the churchyard. The weather-vane is now on a building off Station Road.  (Codville Times.)

HUSBANDS BOSWORTH. 643844

Plaster stripped from the gable of the old Wheatsheaf Inn revealed 16th-cent. ornamental timbering. The adjacent building is of cruck construction with a stone chimney breast.  

Photo. in Leic. Mus.

HUSBANDS BOSWORTH. 641838

A copper sixain of the Kingdom of Cyprus and Jerusalem, probably of James II (1460-73) (Obv. rampant lion; Rev. Jerusalem cross) was found.  

Now in Market Harborough Mus.

KIRBY MUXLOE. 522045

2 wells, 1 of brick and 1 of stone, were found during building to the N. of the castle. They were at once filled in.  (Eyewitness account.)

MARKET HARBOROUGH. 741882

From the Ridgeway. Small bronze coin of Crispus, No. 3 the Ridgeway, small bronze coin of Valens. No. 12 Great Bowden Road, small bronze coin of Constantine I. From the Ridgeway, fragments of a jar of grey ware, probably 4th cent. A.D.  

Map reference 742883.  All in Market Harborough Mus.
(a) ANSTEY. Cruck cottages during demolition

(b) HUGGLES COTE. The Ranger's Cottage during demolition
MARKET HARBOROUGH. 741874
St. Mary-in-Arden. The Urban District Council are proposing to take over the churchyard, record the inscriptions "when the weather is suitable and the staff available" and then relay it out. (Market Harborough Advertiser, 7 Feb. 1957.)

NORTH KILWORTH. 615834
Plans are in hand for 2 half-timbered cottages, the property of a member of the Society, to be taken over by the Lutterworth R.D.C.

RAGDALE. 661199
Demolition of the Old Hall began during the year. An account of the building will be given in the next volume.

REDMILE. 786362
The carved overmantel from the Duke of Rutland's waiting room at Redmile station has been removed by the Curator of Historical Relics, British Transport Commission.

SCALFORD. 763241
A pupil of Scalford Church of England School found a silver denarius of Trajan (Mattingly and Sydenham 41) in the churchyard.

STAPLEFORD. 812182
The gold chalice of 1632 has been sold to the British Museum.

SYSTON. 626118
The parish chest, probably of 15th-cent. date, was recently destroyed.

WILLESLEY. 341147
The church was attacked by vandals in June and much of the glass broken. A scheme for general renovation is in hand.

WORTHINGTON. 408206
The early 19th-cent. Lock-up and Pound have been sold to Ashby R.D.C. The Pound has been destroyed, but the Lock-up ("Round House") is to be preserved at the entrance to the new housing estate.

LEICESTERSHIRE RECORD OFFICE
The following records have been deposited during the year ended 31 March 1957:

PARISH RECORDS
1. Billesdon:
   (a) Civil Records—includes Enclosure Act, 1764, Valuation Book, 1826, Account books and papers regarding Charities, 1842-1933;
   (b) Burial Board—includes Registers of Burials and of Grants of Graves and Vaults, 1870-1897.
3. Mountsorrel—includes papers relating to Apprenticeships, Settlements, and Removals, Bastardy and Mountsorrel Workhouse, 1704-1827.

ENCLOSURE AWARDS
Long Clawson (and Map) 1780, Harby (with 2 strip maps) 1793, Hose (with Map) 1796.

TURNPIKE RECORDS
Abstracts from Minute Books of Market Harborough—Loughborough Road, 1725-1879.