

## AMTREE PARK, FILEY, NORTH YORKSHIRE: An Assessment of Archaeological Potential

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T Brigham  
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Plate 1 Aerial photographs south of the camp, August and December 1940

## Summary

This archaeological desk-based assessment has been produced by Humber Field Archaeology, and was commissioned by Mr W.P. Low on behalf of Farmwood Properties Ltd, in support of proposals to construct an ecological habitat on land within the Amtree Park development. This proposed development includes much of the former Butlins Holiday Camp site, Filey, North Yorkshire, and was the subject of a previous desk-based archaeological assessment, commissioned by Crownville Estates Ltd (HFA April 2001). The ecological habitat is sited on former fields on the southern edge of the development, and is to include landscaping, ponds and hibernacula (hibernating areas). These are being developed to allow the translocation of great crested newts from the main site area, and for the benefit of other wildlife. The report assesses whether the scheme will disturb any potential surviving archaeological remains within the area, in order to discharge an archaeological condition attached to Planning Permission granted to the client by the Local Authority, Scarborough Borough Council, on 20th September.

This document draws on the results of the original desk-based assessment to demonstrate that features and artefacts of prehistoric and Roman date exist in the wider area, and landscape features of post-medieval origin still remain on site. It concludes, however, that there is no direct evidence for features of importance being present on the site of the ecological habitat, and that the methodology now proposed for carrying out the habitat scheme is unlikely to result in the disturbance of any remains which may be present. In view of that, it is suggested that any archaeological or geophysical work undertaken would not therefore be necessary in terms of the development.

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Introduction

This desk-based assessment has been commissioned by the client, Farmwood Properties Ltd, in response to an archaeological condition (15) which was attached to full planning permission granted by Scarborough Borough Council on 20th September 2001 (file no 9721/A3). The condition states that:

No development shall take place within the application area until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by Scarborough Borough Council.

Amtree Park occupies a site on the edge of low cliffs of glacial till (boulder clay) and includes areas of demolished and partly-demolished buildings, formerly part of Butlins Filey holiday camp, mainly constructed between the 1940s and 1960s. It also encompasses substantial blocks of uncultivated land, including the area of the ecological habitat (Figures \*\*, Plate 1), which are not thought to have been ploughed since the Second World War, and which were historically mainly used as rough pasture. Fuller details of the past and present features of the site are included in a previous desk-based assessment (HFA April 2001), which concentrated on the area of the main development and its environs.

The Amtree Park development as a whole has been identified by Scarborough Borough Council as environmentally sensitive, mainly because of the presence of areas of undeveloped coastline, and the possibility of visual intrusion, with a potential impact on the existing pattern of open agricultural land. The presence of great crested newts has also now been identified within the former Butlins Camp, having probably migrated from a long established natural pond on the sea cliff outside the camp boundary. These are protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations, 1994 (Regulation 38), and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Conservation Act 1981.

## 1.2 The proposed development

As part of a package of mitigation measures contained in an Environmental Statement produced on behalf of Crownville Estates Ltd in April 2001, artificial wildlife habitats were proposed for the reception and future breeding needs of great crested newts. The newts would be translocated to the habitats from the main development area to the north. Other wildlife would also benefit.

The Environmental Statement, of which the archaeological desk-based assessment formed part, was produced in support of an outline planning application for the redevelopment of Amtree Park (LPA ref 00/000627/OL). The ecological habitat was also an important part of a DETR licence application for permission to translocate the newts.

The initial proposal by Crownville Estates Ltd on 8th May 2001 was for the area of a block of former staff chalets to be levelled, and the inert rubble used to create a large habitat area. In addition, three new ponds would be excavated, two existing ponds modified, and hibernacula (refuges for overwintering newts and other amphibians) constructed. Four of the ponds would have been up to 2.0m in depth, and approximately 25 x 12m in extent, constructed entirely below ground level. Each would be flanked on either side by two hibernacula consisting of 3.0m diameter turf covered rubble mounds 1.5m in depth, of which approximately 1.0m would be below ground level. A fifth pond next to Hunmanby Gap lane would have been smaller, and accompanied by a single hibernaculum. One side of each hibernaculum would have been left unturfed to allow animals access into the rubble core. Each cluster of ponds and hibernacula would have been fenced to prevent public access. The remainder of the fields surrounding the habitats would be left to regenerate to scrub.

This scheme has now been replaced by one which involves minimal disturbance to the surrounding fields. From the plan supplied of the revised scheme (drwg no CPLDL 001S), it appears to include the retention of an existing field pond, and the creation of three new ponds above ground level, presumably using earth/rubble retaining walls supporting a heavy duty butyl liner (Figure 2). One of the new ponds will be a large curving area of open water approximately 200m in length bordering the west side of the area of former staff chalets, which is the main habitat. Two other smaller ponds will be constructed to the west near the A165.

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## 2 Aims and objectives

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This report draws largely on data collated and published in the previous desk-based assessment (DBA) produced for Crownville Estates Ltd (HFA April 2001). This made use of material collected during a site walk-over, data obtained from North Yorkshire Sites and Monument Record, libraries and other sources, including the National Monuments Record, to enable the primary aims and objectives of the desk-based assessment to be completed. These can normally be categorised as:

- 1 To gather information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits, within and in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development area
- 2 To collate the existing written, graphic and technical information, including a site inspection or walk over-survey where appropriate
- 3 To establish the potential for additional, unrecorded archaeological sites, and to highlight areas for which evidence is lacking, either due to the real absence of archaeological material or to the effects of survey bias, past land-use or soil type
- 4 To assess the overall potential and significance of the archaeological remains both known and suspected, within the study areas
- 5 To make recommendations with regard to the future treatment of the archaeological remains, whether mitigation strategies for preservation *in situ*, or preservation by record

As this work has already been carried out for the development area as a whole, the following study concentrates on re-examining some of the evidence for the presence/absence of archaeological features surviving in the study area, and considers whether the current proposals are likely to affect such remains.

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### 3 Methodology, sources, and report format

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The sources of information consulted during the production of the original DBA and this document are noted below. Where applicable, additional published and unpublished sources are quoted in the report text and their details are noted in the bibliography:

#### *Archaeological collections*

North Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Record (Heritage Unit) provided by Neil Campling, and Ordnance Survey record cards.

#### *Aerial Photographs*

Photographs housed in the collection of the National Monuments Record of English Heritage.

#### *Cartographic and Pictorial sources*

Ordnance Survey Maps — in particular the 1855 6" and modern 1:10000 and 1:25000 editions.

#### *Published information*

Relevant published material (see References).

#### *Other sources*

Copies of:

Application for Permission to Carry Out Development (Crownville Estates Ltd, 8th May 2001)

Grant form for Full Planning Permission (Scarborough Borough Council, 20th September 2001, decision no 01/00468/FL, file no 9721/A3)

Proposed Ecological Habitat: sections, plans, and location maps (Barton Willmore Partnership, 19th March 2001, drwg no 9721/P2A; 3rd May 2001, drwg nos 9721/P17-18)

Pond Location Plan (Farmwood Properties, Oct 2001, drwg no CPLDL 001S)

#### *Field Inspection*

A site inspection or walk-over survey was undertaken as part of the original DBA by the author of this report. This involved the assessment of past and present land-use that may have affected the survival of known or potential archaeological features, and a review of the current condition of the site. A survey was also made of land immediately around the Amtree Park development in order to observe and note any archaeological remains which may currently be exposed. Included in the walkover was the area of the proposed ecological

habitat, which included the still extant, but roofless, staff chalets, and two disused fields. The staff chalet area was disturbed by terracing and service trenches, with a considerable quantity of building debris, metalwork and general rubbish scatter. The field to the east had been used as a dumping ground for levelled building debris, forming an artificial terrace along the eastern boundary with a cultivated field belonging to Moor Farm. The fields to the south and west where the ponds are to be sited were grassed, with occasional shrubs, and with no signs of recent disturbance.

A photographic record of the survey was made for the assessment archive.

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## 4 The archaeological and historical background

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### 4.1 Topography and geology

#### *General area*

The drift geology of the study area is glacial till (boulder clay), a soft material of recent geological origin which is prone to slippage, and easily eroded.

Much of the coastal plain in the area, broadly following the line of the main coast road (A165), is characterised by 'swarms' of drumlins, groups of small ovoid mounds of glacial origin. The main coast road and lane to Hunmanby Gap (Sands Road) therefore have a characteristic 'rollercoaster' appearance.

#### *Habitat area*

The site lies mainly between the 40–50m OD contour interval, rising gently to the west towards the edge of the Wolds and east towards the sea, also southwards towards an east–west ridge bounded by Wold Farm and Reighton Gill. During the construction of elements of the former Butlins Camp, there was considerable modification of the natural contours in the northern part of the habitat area by terracing and excavation.

The area is intersected by spring-fed streams, some of which feed small ponds and marsh in lower-lying parts, particularly between the staff chalets and the main coast road. Patches of gorse, hawthorn and bramble are common locally, and quickly colonise abandoned areas.

### 4.2 Prehistoric period

#### *General area*

The area surrounding Amtree Park and on the neighbouring Wolds was relatively densely occupied throughout the prehistoric period, and there are a number of surviving monuments (Figure 1). More are known to have been lost to ploughing since the 19th century, although some are visible as cropmarks with the aid of aerial photography.

Linear earthworks characterise the Wolds, although the nearest to the site lie about 1km south of the site next to the high road between Hunmanby and the Dotterel public house, immediately to the east of Graffitoe Farm, (NGR TA 1220 6750). These form the visible part of a series of features which otherwise exist only as cropmarks. Such earthworks, which represent features with a variety of purposes, such as tribal boundaries, field systems, enclosures, and occupation sites, are, however, mainly above 80–90m OD, and do not concern the habitat site.

In closer proximity to the site are a number of burial mounds (locally *howes*, or *tumuli* in Ordnance Survey terminology). These occur both singly and in small groups. Where excavated, these have often been accompanied by other lower status burials, forming small cemeteries. Immediately to the south of Moor Farm near the southern site boundary, is a burial mound, formerly known as *Stir Heath Howe*, which seems to have been disturbed,

although it is not known to have been excavated (Scheduled Ancient Monument NY 847; NGR TA 1260 7682). A second possible burial mound, *Muscle Howe* (NGR TA 1268 7672), formerly lay c 140m to the south-east of *Stir Heath Howe*, but was presumably ploughed out in the 19th or early 20th century. A further burial mound, *Eller Howe* (NGR TA 1185 7943) was also marked on the 1855 Ordnance Survey map on what is now Filey Golf Course, some distance to the north of the site. Further mounds cannot be ruled out in the fields immediately north of the Hunmanby Gap road around Moor Farm, which include the application site.

#### *Habitat area*

There are no known prehistoric features within the habitat area boundaries. It is not impossible, however, that the remains of round barrows, burials, or associated occupation may be present.

### **4.3 Roman period**

#### *General area*

The East Riding was not occupied by the Romans until the army moved north of the Humber into the territory of the *Parisi* in AD 71–2. Late Roman pottery of a type found at a 4th-century signal station on Filey Brigg was found in modern Primrose Valley in 1923–4, on the south side of Long Whin Gill (NGR TA 1203 7887). Further extensive scatters of pottery continued to be found by building contractors throughout the 1930s across a wide area of the south side of the gill (Clark 1935, 83). It is likely, given the quantity of pottery referred to, that a settlement or occupied site, probably of fairly high status, existed in the Primrose Valley area.

#### *Habitat area*

Although any buildings related to the pottery finds are likely to have been located to the north of Amtree Park near Long Whin Gill, the presence of Romano-British field systems on or near the habitat site should not be ruled out.

### **4.4 Medieval and post-medieval periods**

#### *General area*

Although there are old enclosed fields and other possible features associated with the lost medieval hamlet of *Fowthorpe*, a satellite township of Hunmanby, this was sited a considerable distance to the north near modern Fowthorpe Farm (NGR TA 114 781). Most of the Amtree Park area was part of Hunmanby Moor, a large unenclosed common used for rough grazing until the early 19th century. Any medieval or earlier post-medieval features of the area still extant in the early 19th century were removed, and replaced by a pattern of fields which were laid out over the Moor as the result of the parliamentary enclosure of Hunmanby parish in 1809.

#### *Habitat area*

There is no evidence for medieval settlements occupying Hunmanby Moor, which seems to have remained the waste or common of Hunmanby until final enclosure around 1809. This was doubtless largely due to the poor quality of the badly drained soil.

this was graded down towards the staff chalets and the existing pasture to the south. The fields to the south and west of the staff chalets appear to have been left untouched, although the site of the staff chalets itself was covered in February by roofless, but otherwise intact buildings, and areas of rubble.

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## **5 Assessment of archaeological potential**

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### **5.1 Prehistoric period**

There is clear evidence for the exploitation of land in the area during the prehistoric period. Burial mounds have been recorded to the north and south, and further burials in the Hunmanby area to the west. It is possible, therefore, that other ploughed-out mounds exist locally, although aerial photographs do not reveal any in the development area.

### **5.2 Roman period**

The discovery of late Roman pottery nearby in 1923–4 and afterwards, suggests the presence of a 3rd- to 4th-century settlement or farm, perhaps situated near Long Whin Gill at the north side of Primrose Valley Caravan Park. Outlying farm enclosures or even structures may be present on the site, although this is unlikely, given the distance of the habitat area from the known findspots.

### **5.3 Medieval and post-medieval periods**

It is unlikely that any medieval remains are present, as records suggest that the area was common waste, used for grazing, unless droveway and stock enclosures were laid out on the moor.

A late 18th-century rabbit warren was located nearby within Butlins Camp, and traces of this are visible on aerial photographs; its site also appears on the 1855 OS map as *Warren Hill*. No similar post-medieval structures are known to have existed in the development area.

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## 6 Conclusions and recommendations

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A number of recommendations and suggestions regarding Amtree Park were made in the original desk-based archaeological assessment, of which only one affects the habitat site.

The southern part of Amtree Park, including the staff chalets and the northern part of the surrounding fields, was intended to be a picnic area and garden centre, with car parking and an outdoor plant sales area (details from a concept plan, drwg no 9721/P10). The majority of the two fields facing onto Hunmanby Gap Road was to be retained as an open area, taking into account the possible visual intrusion of the development on open farmland. This southern area coincides broadly with the location of the proposed wildlife habitat.

It was suggested in the original DBA (section 6.1: Future treatment of the site) that the option of geophysical survey could be considered with regard to future site management in this general area, given its proximity to the existing tumulus south of Hunmanby Gap road. In the current scheme for the ecological habitat, the staff chalet area is almost certainly too heavily disturbed for archaeological features to survive, or for a geophysical survey to be carried out successfully because of the presence of rubble and metalwork.

The first scheme for the construction of ponds and hibernacula (see section 1.2) would have involved some disturbance of the area, and in that instance, geophysical survey could have been considered if it was thought likely that archaeological features were present. The modification of the scheme, however, with the construction of the ponds above ground level, has ensured that it involves minimal disturbance to the fields. **It is suggested on that basis that there is no current need for geophysical survey or any other form of archaeological investigation in the area of the ecological habitat.** This may be addressed at a future date, should intrusive development ever be considered.

## Acknowledgements

The report and recommendations were compiled, written, and edited by Trevor Brigham. The colour photographs, with the exception of Plate 23, were also his work. The figures were produced by Mike Frankland and Chris Brown.

Special thanks are extended to Neil Campling of the North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit for kindly providing Sites and Monuments information, and making recommendations regarding their interpretation, and to Cecil Mowthorpe, for details of the history of Hunmanby Moor and its later development, and providing Plates 1–3.

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