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Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Report No. 250

March 1993

**A5 (T) Nesscliffe Bypass Archaeological
Survey
Stage 2 report
Part II: Interpretation**

**Prepared for
Frank Graham Consulting Engineers Limited
on behalf of the Department of Transport
by
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit**

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A5 (T) Nesscliffe Bypass Archaeological

Survey

Stage 2 report

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Part II: Interpretation

8.0 DISCUSSION

The results of the landscape survey and fieldwalking were principally negative, indicating that there are no new features of equivalent importance to the already identified crop-mark sites. The landscape still represents the basic enclosed field pattern, and the recent grubbing out of smaller field boundaries is the only significant modification. The extremely limited quantities of ploughsoil artefacts suggested by the fieldwalking do not appear to indicate much sub-surface evidence for former settlement activity within the arable areas of the road corridor.

The geophysical survey has confirmed the existence and survival of the pit alignment at Site 3. Two of the sites targeted for trial trenching (Sites 4 and 5) appear to confirm the negative geophysical results, since no archaeological evidence relating to the cropmarks was discovered at either site. It would seem likely that the cropmark features at these sites have either been eradicated by recent ploughing or were created by natural phenomena.

The trial trenches at Site 6 (which was not geophysically surveyed) confirmed the initial cropmark interpretation of a rectilinear enclosure, although the outworks appear to be slightly less complex than originally thought. The enclosure itself was demarcated by substantial ditches on the eastern and western sides, particularly the eastern ditch (F12) which was almost 4m wide. There was no trace of the ditches on the eastern side of the enclosure, which should have been located in Trenches 4, 5 and 6. The only outwork positively identified was located to the north east of the enclosure, in Trench 7. In this area, there is a break in the slope of the field, and the curving cropmark seems to respect the natural topography, following the contour around the edge of the slope. Given the constraints imposed by narrow

evaluation trenches it was not possible to distinguish any internal features/structures, with the exception of the narrow linear feature (F10) identified in Trench 3.

In summary, the three major ditches (F11, F12 and F13) coincide almost exactly with the cropmark plot of the aerial photographs and demonstrate the existence of a single-ditched enclosure with at least one surviving outwork. The remaining cropmark features probably correspond with natural variations in the subsoil. It was not possible to establish from the evaluation results whether or not this site extends beyond the area currently described by the cropmark, and no firm dating or functional evidence was obtained from the ditch-fills. However, evidence from other enclosures of this class and type in the Welsh Marches points to a 'farmstead' enclosure of later prehistoric or Romano-British date.

9.0 OPTIONS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

The following assessment is based upon the Draft Agreed Engineering Plans dated March 1993 and produced by Frank Graham Consulting Engineers.

Site 3

The assessment has confirmed the existence and survival of the pit alignment. A length of this feature 80m long is threatened by the proposed development (Fig. 2). It is likely that preservation by record (excavation) rather than preservation *in situ* of this section will be required.

Site 4

The proposed roadline intersects with the features suggested by both the original cropmark plot and the subsequent plot (Fig. 2). However,

neither feature could be identified by either the geophysical survey or the trial trench suggesting that the site does not survive as a significant archaeological feature. It is unlikely that any further archaeological input will be required other than a watching brief.

Site 5

The proposed roadline clips the westernmost part of the feature suggested by the cropmark (Fig. 3). Although slight anomalies were identified from the geophysical survey no archaeological features were identified in either of the trial trenches. It is unlikely that any further archaeological input will be required other than a watching brief.

Site 6

The assessment has established the extent and quality of survival of the enclosure and an associated outwork. The majority of the enclosure lies outside the area of the development (Fig. 4). The overlying topsoil (up to 0.5m) should provide sufficient protection for these areas assuming the area is not disturbed to any extent by heavy machinery. However, the northeastern part of the enclosure does lie within the road corridor. It is likely that preservation by record (excavation) rather than preservation in situ of this area will be required.

Further excavation is also likely to be necessary on the northeastern outwork in order to further clarify its character and date.

No further archaeological sites of any significance were identified during the survey.