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**1, CHURCH LANE COTTAGES,  
NORTH ORMSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

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LCCM Acc No:	2005.216	
Planning refs.	N/130/00581/05	

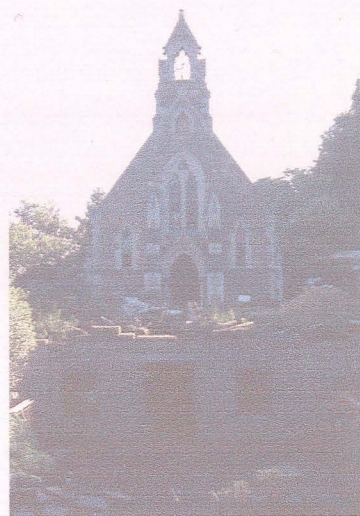


Report prepared for Mr. J. Bass

by

R. D. Gardner

October 2005



Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln)  
 Unit G  
 William Street Business Park  
 Saxilby  
 Lincoln  
 LN1 2LP  
 Tel. & Fax. 01522 703800  
 e-mail mail.pca@virgin.net  
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jad

Conservation  
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Directorate

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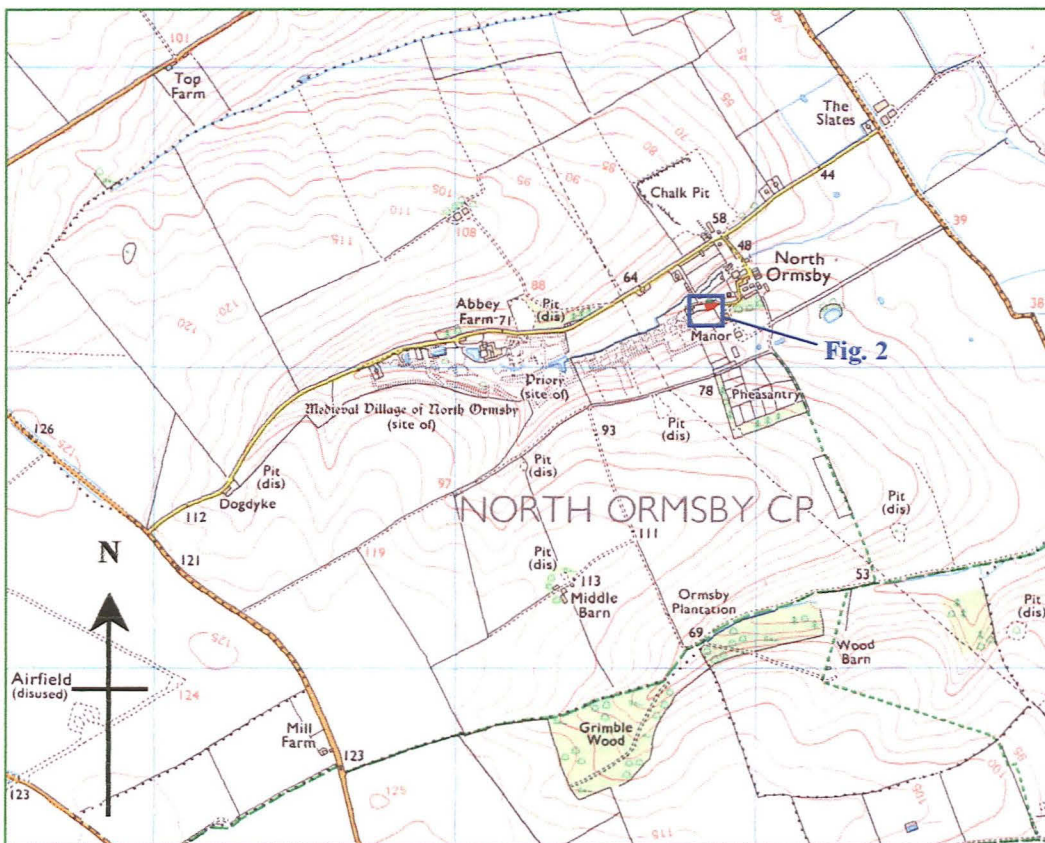
- Fig. 1: Site location plan, scale 1:25 000  
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### Summary

- An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks for a garage adjacent to 1, Church Lane Cottages, North Ormsby, Lincolnshire.
- The site lies within the shrunken medieval village of North Ormsby, and directly north-east of an extensive area of well-preserved medieval earthworks connected with Ormsby Priory.
- No archaeological features were observed during the watching brief.



**Figure 1:** Site location plan at scale 1:25 000, showing the extent of the village and priory earthworks. The development site is shown in red, and the area of Figure 2 is outlined in blue. (O.S. copyright licence no. AL 515 21 A0001)

## 1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Mr. J. Bass to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a garage and store on land at 1, Church Lane Cottages, North Ormsby, Lincolnshire.

These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal project brief issued by the Built Environment Team for Lincolnshire County Council, in accordance with a project specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). This approach is consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (Department of the Environment, 1990), *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991) and *Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IFA, 1999). what spec

Copies of this report have been deposited with the commissioning body and the County Sites and Monuments Record. Reports will also be deposited at Lincoln City & County Museum, along with an ordered project archive for long-term storage and curation (evaluation and watching brief).

## 2.0 Site location and description (figs. 1 & 2)

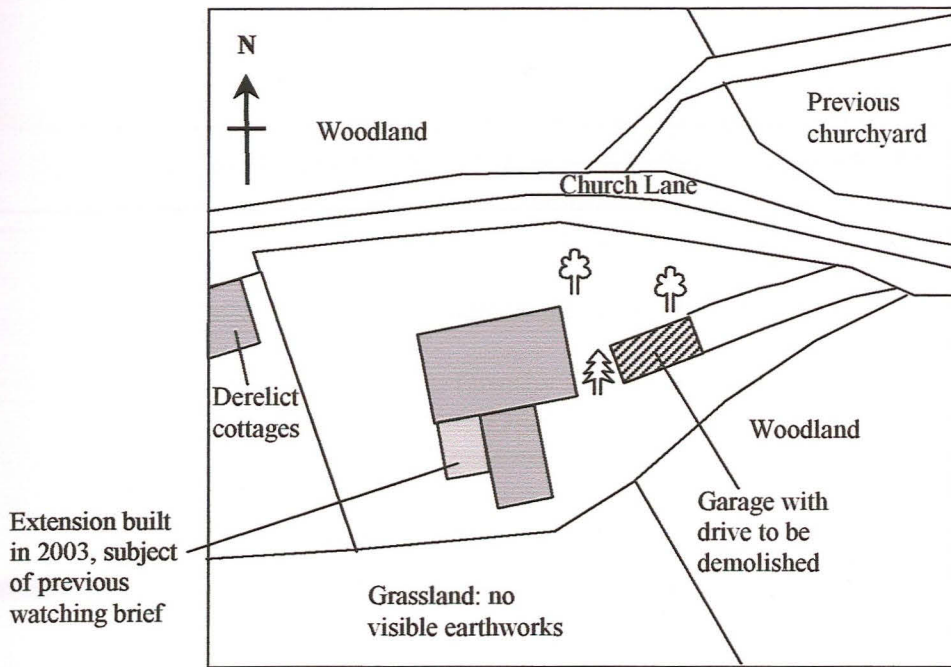
The shrunken medieval village of North Ormsby is located approximately 7km north-west of the small market town of Louth, in the administrative district of East Lindsey. It lies within a small valley cut into the eastern edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds by a stream flowing down off the Wolds. The earthworks of the deserted village, with those of the Gilbertine priory, occupy most of the length of the valley, ending in the present village, which lies near its mouth.

The development site lies on the south-west edge of the modern village, on the south side of Church Lane, which at this point has become a metalled track, finishing at two derelict cottages to the west of the site; the earthworks of the deserted medieval village extend to south and west of the end of the lane. To the south of the site are the grounds of North Ormsby Manor, and to the north-east, on the other side of Church Lane, is the raised churchyard of the deconsecrated church of St. Helen, now a private house and garden.

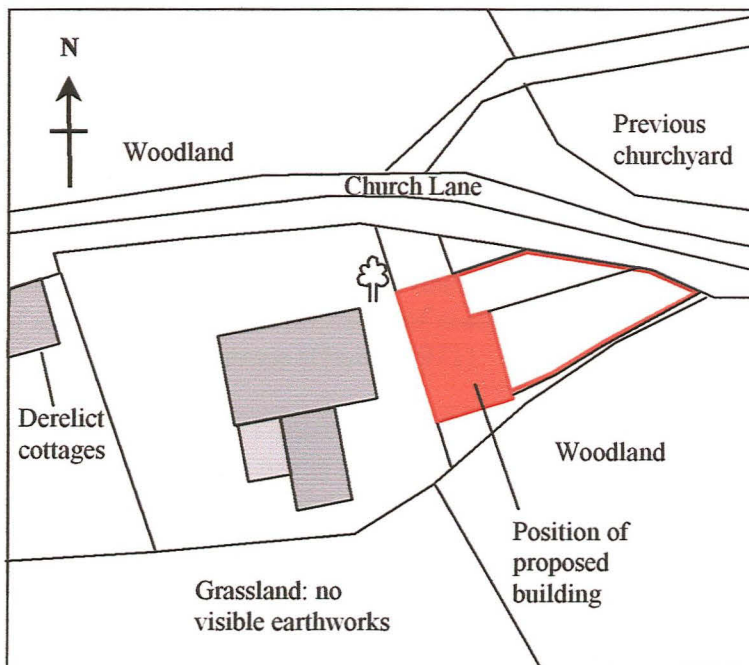
The site is near the foot of the southern side of the valley, and slopes steeply from south to north: the existing house is terraced into the hillside, with a drop of some 1.5m from the ground level directly on its south side to the house floor level. The current development site, on the east side of the house, was previously occupied by a garage on a narrow terrace at a slightly lower level, with steep, grass-covered banks rising to the south and falling to the north.

The local drift geology is principally glacial till, with a narrow band of alluvium tracing the course of the stream; the underlying solid geology is Welton Chalk (British Geological Survey, 1990).

Central National Grid Reference TF 3545 3796.



**Figure 2a:** Plan of the development site prior to the demolition of the existing garage building, at scale 1:500.



**Figure 2b:** Plan of the proposed development, at scale 1:500. The area of the watching brief is outlined in red. Plans by permission of Mr. J. Bass.

### 3.0 Planning background

Full planning permission was granted for the construction of a garage and store (planning ref. N/130/02199/02). This permission was granted subject to the undertaking of a watching brief on all groundworks.

### 4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The first written reference to Ormsby appears in a charter dating to 1066-68, in which Will of Ulf disposed of land *æt Vrmesbyg* (Sawyer, 1998). The place-name itself derives from the Old Danish personal name *Orm* and the Old Danish suffix *-by*, 'Orm's village', probably indicating a Viking period origin (Cameron, 1998).

The Domesday Survey of AD 1086 records Ormsby as a large and prosperous settlement, at that time divided between three landholders: the Bishop of Lincoln and the Norman noblemen Ivo Taillebois and Drogo of La Beuvriere. Land use included arable farming, pasture and managed woodland, with a total recorded population of 31 households as well as the two named sub-tenants (Williams and Martin, 1992). The Lindsey Survey, carried out in AD 1115-18, is not as detailed as Domesday Book, but indicates that the village may already have been declining: only two landowners are listed, and less land was under the plough (Foster and Longley, 1924).

The Gilbertine priory at Ormsby was established in 1148-1154 AD, after which the village is sometimes referred to as Nun Ormsby – Gilbertine houses were double, containing both monks and nuns. Ormsby Priory was one of the largest Gilbertine houses, with a population of 30 nuns, 5 canons and 7 'sisters' recorded in 1376 (Owen, 1971). The earthworks near the head of the valley to the west represent the remnants of the priory itself, utilising the stream both as a water supply for the priory itself and to feed fishponds whose remains can still be seen on the Ordnance Survey map (fig. 1). Those directly south-west of the site, including square house platforms and sunken hollow-ways, represent the rest of the medieval village, which may have been demolished when the priory was built (Pevsner, 1989): the Gilbertines were an austere, exempt order who would not have tolerated secular neighbours close at hand, while the income of the Gilbertine order depended largely on the wool trade, and the farming of sheep, unlike the production of arable crops, did not require a readily available source of local labour (Owen, 1971).

No church is listed in North Ormsby in the Domesday Survey, and the recent parish church of St. Helen, directly to the north-east of the site, has no surviving masonry older than the late 13<sup>th</sup> century (Pevsner, 1989). The church is now deconsecrated and in use as a private house (cover illustration): part of a 14<sup>th</sup> century churchyard cross was visible in the churchyard prior to its deconsecration (*ibid.*).

In a pasture adjacent to Abbey Farm, to the north-west of the present village, is a life-size classical statue known as the 'White Lady', which was set up in the area around 1850 (cover illustration). This statue is said by Pevsner to be late Roman, but is described as '18<sup>th</sup> century style' by English Heritage in the scheduling document for the earthworks (Pevsner, 1989; landowner of Abbey Farm, *pers. comm.*), and is not

believed to be of local origin.

The main part of the house presently occupying the development site dates to 1875 (Gardner, 2003), and two cottages in an identical style, now derelict, at the end of Church Lane to the west are likely to be of the same date.

A watching brief was carried out at 1, Church Lane Cottages by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) in 2003, when the house was extended on the west side. A single sherd of late 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century pottery was retrieved from the fill of a service trench, but no archaeological features had survived the groundworks for the original house platform, within which the extension lay (*ibid.*).

## 5.0 Methodology

The existing garage had been demolished before the commencement of the watching brief, leaving its concrete base and a concrete drive to the east. Excavation work began on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2005, using a wheeled 180° excavator fitted with a 1.5m toothless ditching bucket; spoil was loaded into an open dumper and piled elsewhere on the site. Topsoil was initially removed from the slope on the north side of the garage; the concrete drive and garage base were then taken out. The south side of the site was excavated in stages, first removing the topsoil and some 0.3m of the underlying natural clay, and then extending the garage terrace further into the hillside, resulting in a drop of some 2m at the south side of the site.

All excavation work was closely monitored, and contexts observed were recorded on standard watching brief recording sheets. A colour photographic record of the progress of the groundworks was maintained, selections from which have been reproduced in this report (Appendix 1). The watching brief was carried out by the author.

At the end of the first day, all topsoil had been removed from the development site, and the underlying natural had been cut into to depths varying from 0.20m to 2m. Since no archaeological deposits or features had been exposed and there was no possibility that any could now be present, the watching brief was concluded without monitoring the foundation trenches for the new building.

## 6.0 Results

The garage base and associated drive consisted of concrete to a depth of approximately 0.15m, in the garage base reinforced with metal wire. Below the concrete was a bedding layer of sand, gravel and brick and tile rubble some 0.20m thick: the bricks were similar to those in the existing house, largely light yellow flecked with light red and machine-made. The rubble overlay the natural clay, 002.

The remainder of the garden area was covered by lawn and topsoil 001, a dark greyish-brown clay loam containing modern rubble, china and glass fragments, particularly frequent at the east end of the site. Topsoil depth varied from 0.25m at the top of the slope to 0.60m on the north side of the garage base. No pre-industrial



material was observed.

Below the topsoil and the garage base was natural clay 002: a compact, plastic mid-brown clay, becoming more compact with light grey veining and frequent chalk flecks towards the base of the excavation. No archaeological deposits, cut features or material were seen in this layer.

## **7.0 Discussion and conclusion**

The site lies at the edge of an extensive and well-preserved area of medieval earthworks (plates 1 and 2), but no earth features were seen in the groundworks of either this or the previous construction works on this site. The absence of features in a previous watching brief was ascribed to the position of the house and proposed extension on a terrace set back into the hillside (Gardner, 2003), which would almost certainly have destroyed any remains of surface or sub-surface earthworks. The same reason can be advanced for the absence of archaeological material over much of the present development site, although the south side of this site was at a similar height to the land behind and had probably not been seriously affected by the 19<sup>th</sup> century groundworks.

Since the field directly to the south and south-west of 1, Church Lane Cottages is not recorded as containing earthworks, it is also possible that the watching brief observed no archaeological material because none had ever been present in that area. However, unless the village church was originally built as an adjunct to the manor house, it seems unlikely that it would have stood at such a distance from the rest of the village: it is more likely that the surface earthworks do not extend as far as the church because the field has at some time been ploughed.

## **8.0 Effectiveness of methodology**

The methodology chosen adequately demonstrated the absence of archaeological remains in the development area, where a more detailed level of intervention would not have been necessary.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Mr. J. Bass for this commission, and the contractors for their co-operation during the watching brief.

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### **11.0 Site archive**

The documentary and physical archive for the site is currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeology. This will be deposited with Lincoln City and County Museum within six months from the completion of the project.

## Appendix 1: Colour Plates

**Plate 1 (right):** The earthworks of North Ormsby medieval village, looking south from the road on the north side of the village.



**Plate 2 (left):** The earthworks of North Ormsby medieval village, looking south-east towards the present village: Church Lane Cottages are visible on the extreme left of the picture.

**Plate 3 (right):** The development site following the demolition of the old garage, looking west towards the present house.





**Plate 4 (left):** Topsoil being stripped on the north side of the site, showing the underlying natural 002.

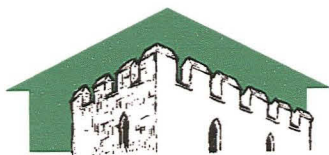
**Plate 5 (right):** Removal of the concrete base from the garage and drive area, looking south with the stripped north side of the development site in the foreground, showing the difference in ground level across the site.



**Plate 6 (left):** The south side of the development after extending the garage terracing into the bank behind, showing topsoil 001 overlying natural 002.

## **Appendix 2: List of contexts**

- 001 Dark greyish-brown clayey topsoil containing modern rubble and domestic refuse
- 002 Compact mid-brown natural clay deposit, with light grey veining and flecks of chalk below 1m depth.



**PRE-CONSTRUCT  
ARCHAEOLOGY**

**L I N C O L N**

UNIT G, WILLIAM STREET  
BUSINESS PARK,  
SAXILBY, LINCOLN, LN1 2LP  
TEL/FAX 01522 703800

*Bob Moly*

*Jim*

Highways & Planning  
Directorate

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