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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON LAND AT FOSSDYKE CANAL <u>TORKSEY</u> (FENTON) LINCOLNSHIRE (TFC05)

> Work Undertaken For Atkins Heritage

> > On behalf of the

Environment Agency

November 2005

Report Compiled by Mark Allen BSc(Hons) AIFA

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT SERVICES



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1. SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land adjacent to the Fossdyke Canal, Torksey, Lincolnshire. The trenching was undertaken to assess the likely impacts of proposed flood defence improvement works on the buried archaeological resource

Evidence of a Roman site had previously been found in close proximity to the investigation area. The investigation identified ditches perhaps related to a late Roman field system. A post medieval ditch was identified at the western limit of the investigation.

A hollow was identified which had been subject to flooding, which deposited clays that seal an earlier ground surface, although the dating evidence for this is inconclusive.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of an Evaluation

An archaeological evaluation is defined as, 'a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures. deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site. If such archaeological remains are present Field Evaluation defines their character and extent, quality and preservation, and it enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate' (IFA 1999).

2.2 Planning Background

The essential flood defence improvement works, being permitted development, lie outside of the normal planning regulations. This scheme of evaluation, in the form of trial trenching, has been devised to evaluate the archaeological resource and the impact of the development upon this resource. The results of the trial trenching will be used to develop a suitable mitigation strategy to allow the considered investigation and recording of the archaeological deposits before or during the development, if the results warrant it.

A geophysical survey of the impact area was undertaken prior to the trial trenching by Phil Catherall, Senior Environment Assessment Officer (Archaeology) for the Environment Agency. This survey identified a single anomaly of potential archaeological origin located in the eastern part of the site (Fig. 6)

2.3 Topography and Geology

Torksey lies within the administrative district of West Lindsey, approximately 13.8km east of Retford town centre and c.15.6km northwest of Lincoln city centre (Figure 1). The development site lies some 400m to the east of Torksey Lock, adjacent to the Fossdyke Canal. The site lies to the south of the Canal, adjacent to a 3m deep drainage channel known as the Torksey Soke Dyke. The site is centred on National Grid Reference SK 838 779 (Figure 2).

Topographically the site inhabits a stretch of low lying, flat agricultural land, that at the time of the evaluation trenching comprised a freshly seeded crop in the western field under investigation, and a field of stubble to the east.

Local soils are mapped as being of the Wickham II Association, specifically fine loamy soils over clayey typical stagnogley soils (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 361).

2.4 Archaeological Setting

Evidence for prehistoric activity in the area is represented by chance finds near Little London. These include a Neolithic

polished greenstone axe that was found approximately 70m to the south-southwest, and two staters (coins) of Iron Age date associated with other Iron Age material, found some 230m to the southeast of the site.

Records held at the Historic Environment Record in Lincoln show a bias of information that indicates an intensity of activity dating to the Roman period. The activities include likely settlement remains (evident from an artefact scatter) immediately to the north-north-west, found on the embankment between Torksey Soke Dyke and Fossdyke Canal. Material from this scatter suggests that the site was inhabited between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD. Three pottery kilns have also been discovered to the south of the site. These were excavated in 1937. Some 80m to the northwest of the proposed flood defence improvement works lies a scatter of Romano-British pottery that is believed to identify the location of a farmstead of that date.

A number of finds scatters also provide further evidence of Roman activity in the area. These include a silver ring with engraved gemstone of 3^{rd} century AD date, with Roman coins, found to the southeast, pottery of 2^{nd} century date also to the southeast, and a samian pot sherd, coin and dolphin brooch of 2^{nd} century date found to the south.

The Fossdyke Canal is believed to have been constructed around 120 AD, to provide river access for transporting materials to Lincoln. If this is the case then the waterway is probably Britain's earliest artificial canal. The canal was reused in medieval times, as evidenced through documentary references in the reign of King Henry I (Whitwell 1970). A lack of maintenance of the canal however, caused its abandonment in the 14th century, until the 18th century when extensive work allowed navigation again. Dredging of the canal in the 18th century recovered a figurine of Mars Gradivus.

In 872 AD the Viking 'great army' wintered at Torksey; around this time potters brought in by the Danes from Frankia began to produce pottery here, known as Torksey ware. By the 10th century Torksey was a *burh*, along with Lincoln and Stamford (Sawyer 1998). The demise of Torksey as an important centre is likely linked to the lack of maintenance of the Fossdyke after the Norman conquest of 1086. Certainly, by the 12th century it seems to have been surpassed as the primary port of the county by Boston at the mouth of the River Witham (*ibid*.).

3. AIMS

The general aim of the evaluation was:

• to identify the presence/absence of archaeological deposits. If remains were identified, then the trenching would be used to establish the character, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality of any archaeological deposits that survive within the site limits.

More specific aims for the scheme included:

- to determine the extent and significance of the buried archaeological remains within the works footprint, specifically those associated with prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity
- to inform the design for further archaeological works (if applicable) that will mitigate the impacts of the proposed flood defence works on the archaeological resource in an appropriate manner

4. METHODS

4.1 Trial Trenching

A total of 10 trenches, each measuring 25m by 2m, were excavated across the proposed area of flood defence improvements. The trenching comprised a 5% sample of the overall footprint, with the trenches evenly spaced across the site to provide information of the whole area of works.

Removal of all topsoil and subsoil layers was undertaken by mechanical excavator using a 1.6m wide toothless bucket, to a depth of approximately 0.4m. All plan and section surfaces were then hand-cleaned to provide a clear profile of the excavated deposits, and to identify any features of archaeological interest.

Each exposed deposit within the trench was allocated a unique reference number (known as a context number) with its own individual written description. A photographic record was compiled, and sections were drawn at scale 1:10 or 1:20 (as appropriate), and plans at scale 1:20. Recording of deposits encountered was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services practice.

The location of the trenches was surveyed initially using measuring tapes using existing field boundaries. The trenches were later accurately surveyed using an EDM.

4.2 Post-excavation

Following excavation, all records were checked and ordered to ensure that they constituted a complete Level II archive and a stratigraphic matrix of all identified deposits was produced. Artefacts recovered from excavated deposits were examined and a period date assigned where possible. A list of all contexts and interpretations appears as Appendix 2. Context numbers are identified in the text by brackets. An equals sign between context numbers indicates that the contexts once formed a single layer or feature. Phasing was based on artefact dating and the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them.

5. **RESULTS**

5.1 Description of the results

The results are listed by trench order, with each trench description beginning with the earliest deposits encountered and ending with the modern ploughsoil.

Archaeological contexts are described below. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned during the excavation works.

5.2 Trench 1

The earliest deposit encountered was soft light yellow/white sand (105 and 109), some 0.8m below existing ground level. The sand was only exposed in two handdug slots within the trench, one at the north end of the trench the other at the southern end. The southern slot showed that the natural sand (109) was overlain by a light - mid grey, relatively compact, sand with abundant charcoal flecking (107/108). A large heat-shattered pebble was recovered from the upper element of this layer (107). A thin band at the base of the northern slot (104). These deposits (104, 107 and 108) are thought to have been a former land surface. Sealing deposits (104) and (107/108) in Trench 1 was a stiff light blue/grey clay with occasional charcoal flecking (recorded as (106) in southern slot and (103) in the northern slot). A layer of mid brown clayey sand, (102), that was both compact and plastic in nature was exposed in the northern half of Trench 1 during machine excavation, overlying clay (103) and

(106). Layer (102), which was tentatively identified as a former ploughsoil, contained occasional small rounded stones, with three fragments of handmade brick of post-medieval date being recovered from the northern hand-dug slot. Sealing (102) was layer (101); an orange/brown compacted sand with occasional charcoal flecking and occasional small rounded stones. The nature of this deposit makes it difficult to interpret; it may represent elements of hillwash mixed with former plough-mixing.

5.3 Trenches 2-5, 7 and 9

These negative trenches contained a uniform sequence of deposits and are, therefore described as a single group. The earliest horizons encountered were a series of sands of geological origin, the earliest being exposed in a machine dug slot at the north end of Trench 9 (902 and 903), to a depth of 1.1m. These were overlain by mottled orange compacted sand that was found within all trenches and identified as the natural geology (201, 301, 401, 501, 701 and 901). The natural sand was covered by brown sandy loam (200, 300, 400, 500, 700 and 900), that represents the modern ploughsoil. Some artefactual material was recovered from this horizon, including Roman pottery (200, 600 and 700), medieval tile (700) and a fragment of a post-medieval malting kiln tile (400). Trench 2 was extended by five meters to the make certain that the feature identified in the geophysical survey was investigated. No corresponding archaeological feature was identified.

5.4 Trench 6

The natural orange sand (601) that lay some 0.44m below the existing ground level was cut by a north – south orientated linear [602] that was approximately 1.1m wide and 0.3m deep. The shallow ditch appeared to have silted up gradually with light grey/brown sand (603) that produced a single much abraded sherd of Roman Nene Valley Colour Coated ware $(2^{nd} - 4^{th} century AD)$ during excavation.

5.5 Trench 8

An ephemeral north – south orientated linear, [802], was found to cut the natural orange sand (801). The ditch, which was c.1.4m wide and only 0.22m deep, appeared to have silted up gradually with light grey/brown sand (803) that contained a fragment of slagged sandy clay that may represent a piece of a former furnace of unknown date.

5.6 Trench 10

A large linear, [1002], running broadly north – south, was exposed at the western end of Trench 10. This ditch, which cut the natural sand (1001), contained two fills (1003 and 1004). The primary silting fill (1004) comprised dark grey sand with some small stones and was devoid of artefacts. The secondary fill (1003), a backfilling event, was represented by a mixed deposit of grey/brown and red/brown clayey sand with some small stones. A fragment of post-medieval handmade brick was recovered from (1003).

6. **DISCUSSION**

Four phases of activity were identified at the site. These are listed below:

Phase 1: Natural deposits Phase 2: Undated deposits Phase 3: Post-medieval deposits Phase 4: Modern deposits

6.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural sands were the earliest layers revealed during the investigation and represent natural geological formation.

These deposits correspond with those identified previously in the area.

6.2 Phase 2: Undated deposits

Undated deposits were encountered in Trench 1 (layers), and cut features in Trenches 6 and 8.

The presence of charcoal in some quantities and a large heat-shattered stone in the earliest layer in Trench 1 that was not of geological origin is interesting; and may be indicative of cultural activity possibly prehistoric but lack of dating evidence makes this interpretation difficult. Later fluctuations in the groundwater levels resulted in the covering of the charcoal-rich layer by open water for some considerable period of time, culminating in the formation a thick deposit of clay.

Several linears exposed and sample excavated within the trenches were found to contain artefacts.

A shallow linear in Trench 6 did contain a fragment of Roman pottery, however the degree of abrasion showed that it had been exposed to weathering for a considerable period of time before it was washed into the ditch. A second ditch, exposed in Trench 8, contained a piece of slag that was not of any recognisably dateable form. The nature of the fills and their orientation, however, perhaps indicated they were elements of an associated system of linears, possibly field ditches due to the low density of artefacts within their fills and lack of charcoal that would indicate burning activity nearby.

6.3 Phase 3: Post-medieval deposits

This phase of activity is represented by a layer in Trench 1 and ditch in Trench 10.

A layer within Trench 1 was identified as

possibly representing a former ploughsoil zone of post-medieval date. This sealed an earlier, water-derived deposit of clay (layer 103/106) suggesting that the open body of water that had formed the clay had dried or been drained by the post-medieval period.

A large ditch excavated towards the eastern end of the site (in Trench 10) appeared to be a former field boundary that was backfilled in the post-medieval period. Examination of the 1^{st} edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 shows no evidence of this boundary, indicating it had been backfilled prior to the drawing of the map.

6.4 Phase 4: Modern deposits

The uppermost deposit encountered was brown silty sand ploughsoil, ubiquitous to the area of proposed works. At the western end of the site the ploughsoil was more grey in colour and contained clay within its makeup due to plough truncation of the underlying layers.

7. EFFECTIVENESS OF TECHNIQUES

The techniques employed during the investigation were effective. Mechanical excavation showed that the ploughsoil lay directly over the natural sand, save at the western end of the works footprint. Here, careful manual excavation revealed a sequence of deposits overlying the natural sand and sealed by the modern ploughsoil. Elsewhere, manual excavation of features cutting the natural sand gave some indication of their nature and origin.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigations adjacent to Fossdyke Canal, near Torksey Lock, were undertaken as an evaluation prior to a proposed planning application for flood defence improvement works of the site.

The earliest deposits exposed lay within a distinct depression at the west end of the site. Although undated, the nature of these deposits and the depth of the layers that sealed there indicate they were created some time ago, probably in prehistory. The deposits that seal this charcoal-rich horizon indicate rising water levels sealed the laver under a body of still or very slow-moving water, probably a lake. This area seems to have remained submerged for a considerable period of time, allowing a 0.2m deep layer of clay to form. The location of this body of water indicates it must pre-date the Fossdyke Canal, which is believed to have been constructed as an artificial waterway in the Roman period. The east - west stretch of the Fossdyke that runs parallel to the site may however be much later in date, with the original canal running northwest - southeast, continuing its course north-westwards from the modern bend that lies some 800m to the east of the proposed footprint of works (J. Young pers. comm.). This theory may be given weight by the presence of handmade brick fragments in the horizon overlying the clay layer that suggest the water was drained (either artificially or naturally) and then the land used in the post-medieval period.

Two undated linears were investigated in the eastern of the two fields. Both contained artefacts, however, neither could be dated with any degree of certainty, beyond saying that one contained a fragment of Roman pottery that was considerably worn through exposure. The orientations and nature of the fills however show that they may well be associated, possibly representing elements of a former field system of either late Roman or post-Roman date, the latter assumption being based on the low density of cultural material. The shallowness of the linears indicates that modern ploughing has probably caused substantial truncation of the features, and may have resulted in the complete removal of less substantial archaeological deposits. The sherds of Roman pottery recovered from the topsoil of a number of the trenches may be testimony to this action. Further evidence of this modern truncation was evident at the western end of the site, where the postmedieval buried soil seems to have been partially removed by plough.

The post-medieval ditch that was exposed at the eastern end of the site is likely to be an element of the modern system of field ditches that was removed prior to initial mapping of the area by the Ordnance Survey in 1887.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological project Services would like to acknowledge the assistance of Atkins commissioned this Heritage, who investigation. Phil Catherall. the Archaeology Officer for the Environment Agency is also thanked for his comments during the site meeting. The project was co-ordinated by Mark Williams; the report was edited by Mark Williams and Tom Lane.

10. PERSONNEL

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11. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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12. ABBREVIATIONS

- AAA Allen Archaeological Associates
- APS Archaeological Project Services
- HER Historic Environment Record
- IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists



Figure 1 General Location Plan



Figure 2 Trench Locations



Figure 3 Trench 1 plan with west facing sections







Figure 5 Trenches 6-10 plans



Figure 6 Trench Locations and Geophysical Results

Appendix 1 Context Summary

Context	Туре	Description	Thek	Interpretation
No			(m)	
100	Deposit	Grey/brown clayey sand	0.38m	Ploughsoil
101	Deposit	Compacted orange/brown sand with occasional charcoal flecks and small rounded stones	0.32m	Layer
102	Deposit	Brown clayey sand with very occasional small stones and some charcoal flecking	0.18m	Former ploughsoil?
103	Deposit	Stiff light blue/grey clay with occasional charcoal flecks	0.1m	Waterlain layer
104	Deposit	Grey sand with very occasional small stones and occasional charcoal flecking	0.06m	Former ground surface?
105	Deposit	Soft yellow/white sand	-	Natural layer
106	Deposit	Stiff light blue/grey clay with occasional charcoal flecks	0.2m	Waterlain layer
107	Deposit	Fairly compact grey sand with abundant charcoal flecking	0.22m	Former ground surface?
108	Deposit	Light grey/buff sand with very occasional charcoal and very small rounded stones	0.06m	Former ground surface?
109	Deposit	Soft orange sand	-	Natural layer
200	Deposit	Brown silty sand	0.4m	Ploughsoil
201	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	-	Natural layer
300	Deposit	Brown silty sand	0.35m	Ploughsoil
301	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	-	Natural layer
400	Deposit	Brown silty sand	0.35m	Ploughsoil
401	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	-	Natural layer
500	Deposit	Brown silty sand	0.35m	Ploughsoil
501	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	-	Natural layer
600	Deposit	Brown silty sand	0.43m	Ploughsoil
601	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	-	Natural layer
602	Cut	Shallow north-south orientated linear, approximately 0.3m deep and 1.0m wide	0.3m	Ditch
603	Fill	Grey/brown sand with very occasional small stones	0.3m	Silting of [602]
700	Deposit	Brown silty sand	0.42m	Ploughsoil
701	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	-	Natural layer
800	Deposit	Brown silty sand	0.42m	Ploughsoil
801	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	-	Natural layer
802	Cut	Shallow north - south orientated linear, approximately 1.4m wide and 0.22m deep	0.22m	Ditch
803	Fill	Grey/brown sand with very occasional small rounded stones	0.22m	Silting of [802]
900	Deposit	Brown silty sand	0.48	Ploughsoil

901	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	0.41m	Natural layer
902	Deposit	Light brown/cream sand	0.12m	Natural layer
903	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	-	Natural layer
1000	Deposit	Brown silty sand	0.46m	Ploughsoil
1001	Deposit	Orange/brown sand	-	Natural layer
1002	Cut	North - south orientated linear, approximately 2.8m wide and 0.7m deep	0.7m	Former field boundary
1003	Fill	Grey/brown and red/brown mix of clayey sands with some small stones	0.56m	Upper fill of [902] – backfill
1004	Fill	Dark grey sand with occasional stones	0.14m	Lower fill of [902] - silting

Appendix 2

THE FINDS

by Barbara Precious and Gary Taylor

Recording of the pottery was undertaken with according to the Study Group for Roman Pottery (SGRP) guidelines (Darling 1994), using codes currently in use in Lincolnshire, and sherd and weight as measures. Seven fragments of pottery weighing 44g and representing 5 individual vessels were recovered from 5 separate contexts. In addition to the pottery, a small quantity of other artefacts, brick/tile, stone and industrial residue, comprising 12 items weighing a total of 1148g, was retrieved. No faunal remains were recovered.

Provenance

The material was recovered from channel fills (006 and 019).

Most of the pottery was probably made in close proximity to the site, at Torksey itself, though there are pieces from the Nene Valley near Peterborough, 85km to the southeast.

Range

The range of material is detailed in the tables.

Table 1: Pottery

Context	Fabric Code	Description	No.	Wt (g)	Context Date
200	GREY	Greyware, closed form; possible wide-mouthed bowl or large jar	1	5	Mid 2 nd -4 th century
600	GREY	Greyware, open form; ferrous sandy encrustation, possible small wide-mouthed bowl; abraded (water-worn)	3(link)	11	Mid 2 nd -4 th century
603	NVCC	Nene Valley Colour Coated ware, bead and flange rimmed bowl, very abraded	1	10	4 th century
700	NVCC	Nene Valley Colour Coated ware, bead and flange rimmed bowl, abraded	1	13	4 th century
800	GREY	Greyware, iron stained, abraded (water-worn)	1	5	Mid 2 nd -4 th century

There are 2 sherds of Nene Valley colour-coated ware (NVCC), although on the coarser side and quite abraded, including a bead and flanged bowl (BFB) of the 4th century. These would have been used at the table.

The remaining pottery is in grey ware but in later rather than earlier fabrics. They are quite abraded, water worn, and some are stained with ferruginous material. The fabrics and finish are more typical of the Torksey rather than the Lincoln area. Most are probably wide mouthed bowls or larger jars used as kitchen to table wares.

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Context	Material	Description	No.	Wt (g)	Context Date
101	Industrial residue	Slag, possibly iron smithing slag or slagged clay	1	17	
102	CBM	Handmade brick	3(2 link)	370	Post-medieval
107	Stone	Burnt cobble	1	498	
400	СВМ	Malting kiln tile, perforated	1	7	Late post- medieval
700	CBM	Tile, reduced core, 24mm thick	1	121	Medieval

Context	Material	Description	No.	Wt (g)	Context Date
803	Industrial residue	Slagged sandy clay –furnace structure?	1	34	
1003	CBM	Handmade brick	4	101	Post-medieval

Note: CBM = Ceramic Building Material

Condition

All the material is in good condition and presents no long-term storage problems. Archive storage of the collection is by material class.

Documentation

There have been previous archaeological investigations at Torksey that are the subjects of reports. Details of archaeological sites and discoveries in the area are maintained in the Lincolnshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record.

Potential

All of the pottery is Roman but is generally abraded and occurs as small fragments. Consequently, the collection indicates Romano-British activity in the proximity of, but not on, the investigation site. Therefore the pottery assemblage is of low-moderate local potential and significance. There is a small amount of industrial residue that derives from high temperature processes and which may indicate kilns or similar pyrotechnological features in the general vicinity, though there is no supporting evidence to suggest the processes involved. This material is of moderate local significance.

A small amount of ceramic building material, mostly of post-medieval date, was also recovered. This is generally of limited local potential but signifies buildings of the period, perhaps a malting kiln, in proximity to the investigation area.

References

Darling, M. J. (ed), 1994 *Guidelines for the Archiving of Roman Pottery*, Study Group for Roman Pottery Occasional Paper 2

Appendix 3

THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

62	Context records	

- 10 Scale drawing sheets
- 1 Photographic record sheet 1
 - Box of finds

All primary records and finds are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services The Old School Cameron Street Heckington Sleaford Lincolnshire NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Lincolnshire City and County Museum 12 Friars Lane Lincoln LN2 1HQ

The archive will be deposited in accordance with the document titled Conditions for the Acceptance of Project Archives, produced by the Lincolnshire City and County Museum.

Lincolnshire City and County Council Museum Accession Number: Archaeological Project Services Site Code:

LCNCC: 2005.194 TFC05

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. Archaeological Project Services cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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