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**Settrington to Scagglethorpe
Overhead Line
North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Trial Excavations

August 1997
MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.

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Contents	Page
Figure List	2
Introduction	3
Archaeological and Historical Background	4
Methods	4
Results	4
Discussion and Conclusions	5
Bibliography	6
Appendices - 1. Context List	7
2. Finds Catalogue	8

Figure List

	Page
1. Location Map (1: 25000 scale)	9
2. Area Location map with cropmarks (1: 25000 scale)	9
3. Trench Location Plan (1: 10000 scale)	10
4. Trench 1 Plan.	11
5. Trench 1 East-facing Section.	11
6. Trench 2 West-facing Section.	12
7. Trench 4 Plan.	13
8. Trench 4 East-facing Section.	13
9. Trench 5 Plan.	14
10. Trench 5 East-facing Section.	14
11. Trench 7 Plan.	15
12. Trench 7 East-facing Section.	15

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Introduction

Over three days in June 1997, MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. carried out a series of archaeological trial excavations along the route of a proposed overhead powerline between Scagglethorpe and Settrington, in Scagglethorpe and Settrington parishes, Ryedale District, North Yorkshire (Figs. 1 and 2, SE 8326 7310 and SE 8308 7136 centres).

The excavations took place along a north-south line on the south-western edge of the Vale of Pickering between the 26m and 30m contours. The soils in this area are coarse loams of the Landbeach Association, overlying glacio-fluvial sands and gravels (Mackney *et al.* 1983). The excavated areas (Trenches 1 - 12, Fig. 3) were located in arable fields and were under crop.

The zone at the foot of the chalk Wolds has long been known as important for ancient settlement, where lighter soils, level topography and a ready water supply suited prehistoric, as well as later agriculture. The route of the proposed overhead power line passed close to significant cropmark sites at two locations (Fig. 2), described more fully in the next section:

(a) Area A immediately west of Scagglethorpe village (SE 8326 7310 centre)

(b) Area B on the Holms, east of Settrington Beck (SE 8308 7136 centre)

The 2m square holes required for new poles in these two areas were a sufficient threat to any nearby archaeological deposits for the Archaeology Section of NYCC to call for archaeological examination prior to the erection of the new poles.

The work was funded by Northern Electric Plc.

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Archaeological and Historical Background

The Heslerton Parish Project identified six geomorphological zones for the southern side of the Vale of Pickering (Powlesland *et al.* 1986, 58). The zone relevant to the present report is Zone 5, an area of post-glacial sands and gravels lying to the north and north-west of extensive aeolian sand deposits at the foot of the chalk escarpment. Zone 5 is generally a satisfactory area for the production of cropmarks, unlike the aeolian sands of Zone 4, where wind-blown sand can obscure, but also protect, any underlying archaeological deposits. The route of the overhead line passes through an area which has been the subject of large-scale aerial photographic reconnaissance (by A L Pacitto, D Riley, D Powlesland and others), and accordingly cropmarks provide much information for archaeological sites in the vicinity (Fig. 2):

Area A (SE 8830 7300 centre, Trenches 1, 2 and 3) situated to the north-west of Scagglethorpe village, was in the vicinity of two known sites. SMR 3395 was a double-ditched

cropmark visible c. 100m to the north, and SMR 3460 a cluster of small enclosure-like features, probably of natural origin, situated c. 250m to the north-east.

Area B (SE 8307 7197 - 8324 7111, Trenches 4 - 12), was situated north of Settrington village and east of Settrington Beck, and lay c. 150m east of a cluster of square-ditched cropmarks (SMR 3407. 100-500), previously seen as an Iron Age square-barrow cemetery, but recently re-interpreted as a complex of square buildings and enclosures representing a Romano-Celtic temple. A north-west to south-east aligned linear cropmark (SMR 3407.12) cut through this complex. A mass of linear cropmarks (SMR 3407.13) lay c. 30m east of the route. The linear features are likely to represent medieval, or perhaps earlier, agricultural features.

Previous excavations in the vicinity of the proposed overhead route have been restricted to a series of trial excavations along the proposed Rillington to Malton pumping main (MAP 1993). A post-medieval roadway (SMR 3400) was identified east of Scagglethorpe Bridge, and further afield, c. 1km west of the proposed overhead line, the roadside ditch of the Norton - Settrington Roman road and undated linear features were examined.

Methods

The positions of the trenches to be examined were laid out by staff of Northern Utility Services Ltd. A rear-acting JCB excavator with a broad toothless blade was used to remove the topsoil, and in some cases subsoil, until archaeological deposits or natural was reached (whichever was soonest).

Plans and sections were drawn at 1:20 and 1:10 scales respectively, and a written record was compiled under the continuous context recording system on standard forms. Photographs were taken in 35mm format in colour transparency and monochrome print.

Results

The twelve excavated trenches were numbered 1 - 12 from north to south, i.e. from Scagglethorpe towards Settrington. Each trench was a nominal 2m square. Traces of archaeological activity were found in five trenches (Trenches 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7), described below.

Trench 1 (Figs. 3, 4 and 5)

At the base of Trench 1, an east - west aligned, narrow linear slot (context 1005) cut through the silty sand natural (context 1006). The fill (context 1004) could not be distinguished from similar material extending beyond the confines of the slot. A layer of plastic silty clay silt overlay 1004, and this would appear to represent a "buried soil". A 0.75m deep deposit of silty sand (context 1002) succeeded 1003, and was apparently of wind-blown origin. The overlying topsoil (context 1001) was well-burrowed, and contained sherds of Roman Greyware and calcite-gritted ware, as well as modern material (Appendix 1).

Trench 2 (Figs. 3 and 6)

A deposit of dark 'organic' sand (context 2005) overlay clay sand material (context 2006) at the base of Trench 2, these two contexts representing the undisturbed natural. An overlying layer of brown silty clay (context 2004) would appear to have been a "buried soil". A compact, brown loamy sand deposit (context 2002), seemingly of wind-blown origin, overlay 2004, the material at its base (context 2003) having become iron-panned where it directly

overlay the less permeable "buried soil". Context 2002 contained a sherd of medieval Staxton Ware. A thin topsoil (context 2001) completed the sequence.

Trench 4 (Figs. 7 and 8)

Natural deposits in Trench 4 consisted of an olive-brown clay (context 4005) which was overlain by a brownish sandy clay subsoil (context 4004). This subsoil was overlain by a thin deposit of brown loam (context 4002), and was cut by an east - west aligned linear feature with a rounded-V profile (context 4006). The silty fill (context 4003) contained a medieval sherds, plus many large fragments of a 17/18th century slipware plate (Appendix 2). The trench was covered by a thick modern ploughsoil (context 4001).

The linear feature was almost certainly associated with a field boundary shown on the 1: 2500 O.S. map for 1927. Presumably the existing pole had originally been placed on a former hedge-line.

Trench 5 (Figs. 9 and 10)

In this trench an east - west linear feature (context 5010) cut into silty clay natural deposits (context 5011). The profile of this linear was complex, with a flat-based slot in the base of a broader, more rounded cut, which suggested that it had been recut. The basal fill, a brown clay silt (context 5009), extended upwards over the entire southern edge, suggesting that the ditch had become substantially infilled before being recut as a broader, shallower feature; this contained a variety of fills (contexts 5002-8). The complexity of these fills (particularly contexts 5004-6) may be partly due to rodent burrowing.

By referring again to the 1927 1: 2500 O.S. map, it seems that the ditch in Trench 5 is associated with the same former hedge boundary found in Trench 5 to the west.

Trench 7 (Figs. 11 and 12)

Natural deposits were located at the base of Trench 7, consisting of two differing layers of sandy chalk gravel (contexts 7005 and 7006). The chalk gravels were cut away on the south side by a shallow south-west to north-east aligned feature (context 7004) which was filled by a brownish silty sand (context 7003). The broad shallow profile of this feature suggests that it was a furrow associated with pre-enclosure cultivation. The possible furrow was overlain by a deposit of brown sandy silt (context 7002) that became deeper in the southern part of the trench, i.e. over the furrow itself. A thick modern ploughsoil (context 7001) completed the sequence.

Discussion and Conclusions

The trial excavations along the route of the proposed Scagglethorpe to Settrington overhead line failed to reveal activity associated with the two important sites which it by-passes. This should be seen as satisfactory, as no significant archaeological deposits will be effected by the development, and the minor amount of archaeological remains present have been properly recorded.

Some interesting archaeological information has been gathered from the trial excavations. The presence of deep wind-blown sand deposits covering "buried soil" horizons in Trenches 1 and 2 is significant because it implies that any archaeological remains in the area will be well-protected, although difficult to perceive at the surface through being masked.

A linear feature in Trench 7 points to the cultivation of the area east of Settrington Beck ("the Holms") in pre-enclosure times, a process borne out by the large amount of medieval

sherds on the surface of the fields in this area. The ditches located in Trenches 4 and 5 were boundaries associated with more recent cultivation. The general lack of an extensive subsoil between the modern ploughsoil and the natural deposits on the Holms suggests that any archaeological deposits are therefore not likely to be masked, and so cropmark data should give a reliable indication of sub-surface archaeology in the area.

Bibliography

Mackney *et al.* 1983 *Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 1: Northern England.*

MAP 1993 *Report on Archaeological Excavations along the Proposed Rillington to Malton Pumping Main, North Yorkshire.*

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Appendix 1 - Context List

Context No.	Description
1001	10 YR 3/2 silty, loamy sand; modern ploughsoil
1002	10 YR 4/4 silty sand; wind-blown deposit
1003	10 YR 5/3 clay silt; "buried soil"
1004	10 YR 5/4 v. silty sand; fill / deposit
1005	Cut; linear feature
1006	10 YR 5/1 silty sand; natural
2001	10 YR 4/3 sandy loam; modern ploughsoil
2002	10 YR 4/6 silty sand; wind-blown deposit
2003	10 YR 4/4 clay sand; base of wind-blown deposits
2004	10 YR 4/2 sandy silt; "buried soil"
2005	10 YR 3/1 fine silty sand; natural
2006	10 YR 5/1 fine clay sand; natural
3001	10 YR 4/2 sandy silt; modern ploughsoil
3002	10 YR 4/2 silty clay + ceramic drainpipe; modern field drain fill
3003	Cut; modern field drain
3004	10 YR 5/3 clay silt; colluvial deposit
3005	10 YR 3/1 peaty sand; natural
4001	10 YR 4/2 silty loam; modern ploughsoil
4002	10 YR 5/3 sandy silty loam; subsoil
4003	10 YR 4/4 clay silt; fill of 4006
4004	10 YR 5/4 sandy clay; colluvial deposit
4005	2.5 Y 5/4 sandy clay; natural
4006	Cut; linear feature
5001	10 YR 4/2 silty loam; modern ploughsoil
5002	10 YR 4/3 silty clay; fill of 5010
5003	10 YR 5/4 silty clay; fill of 5010
5004	2.5 Y 4/3 silty clay; fill of 5010
5005	10 YR 4/3 silty clay; fill of 5010
5006	2.5 Y 4/3 silty clay; fill of 5010
5007	10 YR 4/2 loamy silt; fill of 5010
5008	2.5 Y 4/3 clay silt; fill of 5010
5009	2.5 Y 4/3 clay silt; fill of 5010
5010	Cut; linear feature
5011	2.5 Y 5/4 sandy silty clay; natural
7001	10 YR 4/2 loamy silt; modern ploughsoil
7002	10 YR 5/4 sandy silt; subsoil
7003	10 YR 5/4 silty sand; fill of 7004
7004	Cut; linear feature
7005	2.5 Y 6/4 sandy silt; ?natural
7006	10 YR 5/6 silty sand + gravel; natural

Appendix 2 - Finds Catalogue

Context No.	Description
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1001	Total pottery - 5 sherds (incl. 2 rim + 1 handle) (Calcite-gritted Ware, Greyware; Modern white-glazed) Flint - 1 flake frag. Mottled opaque white patina. L. 16, W. 14, Th. 3mm.
2002	Total pottery - 1 sherd (Staxton Ware)
4003	Total pottery - 7 sherds (York Glazed Ware; 6 sherds from same red slipware plate)