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ENY	3935
CNY	
Parish	8057
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**Steeton Hall  
South Milford  
North Yorkshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

April 1997  
MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd

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South Milford  
North Yorkshire  
Archaeological Evaluation**

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**Steeton Hall**  
**South Milford**  
**North Yorkshire**  
**Archaeological Evaluation**

**Introduction**

Steeton Hall is located 600m to the west of South Milford village (SE 4830 3138 Fig 1) and approximately 100m to the south of the Whitecote Lane (B1222) which links South Milford village to Sherburn-in-Elmet and the A1. The site stands at 35m A O D on solid geology of magnesian limestone with overlying soils of the Aberford Soil Association (Mackey at al 1983)

The evaluation took place between 3rd and 5th March 1997 and consisted of five machine excavated trenches. All the excavated trenches were located over 34m to the north of the Hall.

Trench 1, to the west of a semi-derelict cottage, was located to assess an area to be disturbed during the renovation of the cottage and the construction of a new garage.

Trenches 2 and 4 were located immediately to the north of the range of bams/animal stalls, also within an existing track surface which would be replaced by gardens, and were excavated to assess the possible continuation of wall A (Fig 3).

Trench 5 was situated within an existing building was excavated to assess possible disturbance due to the renovation of the buildings into residential units.

Trench 3 was located in an area proposed for gardens but which would be disturbed by service trenches.

This work was funded by the developer, K Slinger.

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**Archaeological Background**

Information on the sites' environs is presently limited to aerial photographic evidence (Fig 2). Apart from the record for standing earthworks on the site activity is confined to a large circular feature to the south-west of the Hall, which may represent a clay pit and further to the south-west a double ditched feature possibly representing a trackway. To the north-east are a series of linear features which possibly equate to land divisions.

Surrounding the Hall are a number of upstanding earthworks. The precinct wall survives as a low bank encircling the site, with stone footings still visible along the bank. The northern boundary of the site appears to have been delineated by the stream and earthworks to the north-west of the Hall utilise the stream as a moat. At the north-eastern corner of the site an earthen bank crosses the stream and forms a fishpond. The importance of the stream to the site is seen by stone revetting and a stone abutment, representing the remains of a sluice to control the flow. Slight earthworks to the north-east and south-east of the Gatehouse, which suggest the survival of house platforms.

### **Historical Background**

Steeton Hall, purchased by the Reygate family in 1261, was a manorial centre for one of the manors of the Barony of Sherburn. William de Reygate, who was Escheator to the King for the County of York, appears to have been based at Steeton and it was probably under his instruction that the Hall and Gatehouse were built in the 14th century. The Gatehouse was built c. 1350-75, but the Hall appears to date prior to this as William de Reygate renewed his licence for a Chapel at Steeton in 1342.

Under William de Reygate the manorial centre experienced a period of importance after which the site appears to have been neglected until 1642 when it passed to the Foljambe family. During the later half of the 17th century the site was remodeled, the hall was extended, farm buildings were erected and the gardens were redesigned.

The importance of the site is illustrated by the protection afforded by the Department of National Heritage. Steeton Hall, the Gatehouse and adjoining walls are Listed Buildings Grade 1 and the barn, granary and cart shed north-east of the hall are Listed Grade 2. The Gatehouse is also in the Guardianship of the Secretary of State (NM 28240). Steeton Hall, the farm buildings, the modern barns, garages, Steeton Cottage, fences, surfaces of paths, tracks and yards and the bridge are all excluded from the Scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.

### **Excavation Methods**

Five trenches were excavated by Kubota to the top of archaeological deposits or natural, whichever came first. An archive was maintained throughout the excavation with plans recorded at 1:20 and sections recorded at 1:10. Photographs were taken on colour print and slide, and monochrome print.

### **Excavation Results**

#### *Trench 1*

Trench 1 was excavated in order to evaluate a possible extension to the cottage (Figs 3 & 4 Pl 1). The trench measured 6m x 2m and was excavated to a depth of 0.21m (c. 37.60m AOD) at which depth natural was recorded as a compact clay silt (context 1006). Cutting

into the natural were two sub - rectangular features (contexts 1002 and 1004 which on examination proved to be a dog burial and an 'animal' burial (contexts 1003 and 1005) These burials may have been pet burials relating to the occupation of the cottage

Sealing the burials was a friable sandy silt topsoil (context 1001)

### *Trench 2*

Trench 2 was excavated in order to evaluate a proposed garden area (Figs 3 & 5 Pl 2) The trench measured 2m x 2.20m and was excavated to a depth of 0.50m (35.42m A O D) at which depth natural was recorded as a compact clay silt (context 2005) Directly on top of the natural was an area of limestone fragments within a compact sandy clay (context 2004), which may represent been an old road surface Sealing this was a series of rubble deposits (0.32m) of crumbly sandy silt with limestone and brick fragments (context 2003), possibly road make-up Another rubble layer (context 2002) may be a leveling deposit for context 2001, the present day road surface

The evidence from Trench 2 suggests that this area may have always been a road or trackway

### *Trench 3*

Trench 3 was excavated to assess the area for a proposed soakaway (Figs 3 & 6 Pl 3) The trench measured 2m x 2.25m and was excavated to a depth of 0.32m (35.20m A O D) at which depth natural was recorded (context 3002) Directly above the natural limestone was a thin layer of friable sandy silt topsoil (context 3001)

No archaeological deposits were located within this area It is significant the deposits are extremely shallow here, this may be due to the fact that at some stage the land was systematically cleared removing any evidence of earlier activity

### *Trench 4*

Aligned south-west to north-east this trench was placed to determine the possibility that wall A continued on a north-westerly alignment into Trench 5 and Trench 4 (Fig 3)

The trench measured 6.5m by 2m and was machined to a depth of 0.72m (35.27m A O D Figs 3 & 7 Pl 4) Excavation located deposits of limestone rubble (contexts 4004, 4003 and 4002) up to 0.60m in depth which all appeared to represent road/track makeup In the south-western area of the trench a large limestone block was observed in section (Fig 7) and during excavation a similar sized block was removed from approximately 1m to the north The in situ block appeared to be set within a cut (context 4006) unfortunately the opposing section was so disturbed that it was impossible to say if this wall continued to the south Even so the occurrence of this block and the disturbed example does suggest that a wall had once been located in this part of the site

Apart from the wall 4010, the deposits in this trench were very similar to those seen in Trench 2 to the west

### *Trench 5*

Located within an existing building (Fig 3), it was this trench which produced the greatest activity. Initially, Trench 5 was hand excavated to a depth of 0.68 (35.47m A O D) before machine excavation of the eastern part of the trench. The results of this excavation prompted the removal of the western area of the trench.

The earliest deposits observed were patches of burning (context 5017, Fig 8 Pls 7 & 8). Sealing these deposits was a relatively thick layer (up to 0.48m in depth) of silty clay (context 5007). This deposit also sealed the remnants of a limestone wall (context 5010). The wall was constructed of limestone blocks of varying size with a rubble core but only survived to a single course in height (context 5010). It was aligned north to south and recorded for a length of 1.20m, and was seen to continue into both the north and eastern sections of Trench 5 (Fig 8 Pl 6), but not the southern section suggesting that a corner of the wall was exposed in Trench 5.

Above layer 5007 were deposits of silty clay and mortar (context 5006 and 5016 respectively). Both deposits would appear to represent leveling deposits. Sealing these contexts were deposits 5002 (a clay mortar and stone matrix) and 5001 (a fine silty sand). Contexts 5001 and 5002 also appear to represent leveling.

It was at this level that a relatively deep cut measuring 1.08m in width and 0.88m in depth with a 'U' shaped profile was observed (context 5008). This feature cut through the earlier deposits (context 5002, 5006 and 5007) and was seen to continue to the west (Pl 5). A similar cut was observed in the north facing section of Trench 5 (not illustrated) suggesting that this feature represents the ruin of possibly a robbed out wall. The height at which it occurs must place it in a relatively late period, possibly just prior to the construction of the standing building which Trench 5 was located in.

Deposits 5014, 5013 and 5012 represented previous use of the building (Pl 6). Context 5014 appeared to be the remains of a mortar floor. The composition of which suggests that the interior of this building may have previously been used for domestic rather than purely agricultural use. Deposits 5013 and 5012 represent leveling, with contexts 5011 (a brick edging), 5015 (limestone slab edging) and 5018 (a brick mortared wall) completing the sequence.

Projection of the alignment of Wall A would suggest that it would have run through Trench 5, and the discovery of Wall 5010 in more or less the right location for the projection would appear to confirm the alignment. Unfortunately the excavation suggests that wall 5010 is returning to the east in Trench 5 and therefore it is unlikely that it is directly associated with

Wall A Excavation results to date cannot determine whether Wall 5010 and Wall A are even contemporary

### **Summary**

A total of five trenches were excavated, the location of which were determined by the proposed development of specific areas of this site. No trenches were placed within the immediate vicinity of the Hall, all trenches were located to the north. Trench 1 located only moderate disturbance and natural deposits at a shallow depth from existing ground level. The only structural activity of a pre-17th century date was located in Trenches 4 and 5. Unfortunately the lack of artefacts means that no period of activity can be accurately ascribed to these structures. The occurrence of a mortar floor within Trench 5 suggests that this building, prior to agricultural use may have been a residential dwelling. Trenches 2 and 4 also recorded a sequence of road make-up deposits.

### **Discussion**

Steeton Hall is classified as a medieval magnates residence and manorial centre (EH AA20041/1). Such sites date from the Norman Conquest and acted as individual residences for varying periods of time, often dependent on the fortunes of the family in residence. The main dwelling on the site was usually occupied by the highest ranking nobles, whether secular or ecclesiastical. As is the case with Steeton and the Reygate family who were closely associated with the monarchy in the 14th century. The high status of these sites necessitated good communication routes and a prominent setting to construct impressive buildings suitable for status and rank. Manorial centres would generally comprise of a series of stone buildings including a great hall, chambers, kitchens, service rooms, lodgings, chapel and a gatehouse arranged around a courtyard. In addition, formal and ornate gardens which were both functional and decorative would also have been established.

The importance of the setting of such sites is illustrated by the need for a reliable water supply. The use of the stream at Steeton has already been mentioned as it forms a natural boundary for the site to the north and was utilized as a moat. The presence of a fishpond is another common feature to these high status medieval centres. The fishpond would have been constructed to raise and store fish, usually maintained by water management system. Evidence for water management is apparent by the channeling and revetting of the stream and the evidence for a sluice. In addition, wells would have been used as a water source for the domestic buildings. A well is still visible on the site, to north of the hall and west of the farm buildings.

### **Conclusions**

Standing buildings only cover a small portion of the site, and are composed of structural elements of 14th to 20th century date. The excavations were limited in scope and the failure to locate any prolonged activity may be explained by two factors. The areas evaluated were outside of the main activity areas. No trenches were investigated immediately in front of the



Hall and earthwork evidence shows building/house platform exist further to the east. This may suggest that the prestigious buildings were centred on the site of the later hall and that ancillary buildings were to the north-east of the hall, as illustrated by the vestiges of a wall and possible floor surfaces in Trench 5. The alternative explanation is that during the 17th century remodeling and redesign of the site, earlier activity was removed during a general clearance phase. It is clear that some form of clearance has taken place in the area to the south of the farm building as shown in Trench 3. The absence of finds from any period also suggests that the 1997 excavations were away from the main activity centres.

### **Development Implications**

Excavations were located in areas which may be affected by the proposed redevelopment of specific areas of the site.

Trench 1 was placed in an area to consider the impact of a possible extension to the cottage. It is clear from the excavation results that this area of the site is apparently sterile apart from recent activity.

Trench 2 only produced evidence of previous yard or road surfaces. Development in this area is considered to be of minimal impact.

Trenches 3 and 4 were located in areas to be affected by drainage works, and indicated that land to the south of the existing range of farm buildings had been leveled in the past. Trench 4 illustrated a similar history to that of Trench 2 except that a section of wall was found. Large quantities of stone within this trench suggest significant leveling at some point within the site's history. Drainage work within this area may provide further evidence on the extent and nature of the partially exposed structure.

Trench 5 produced the most evidence for stratified archaeological deposits. These were protected by the modern brick flooring and make-up deposits. It is clear that any significant reduction of floor levels within the range may have a serious impact on surviving archaeological deposits.

### **Bibliography**

- Bogg, E (1987)            Round about Leeds. The Old Hall Press
- Mackey, D (1983)        Soils of England and Wales. Sheet 1. Northern England

## APPENDIX I

### Context Listing

Context	Description
<b>Trench 1</b>	
1000	maelune dug trench
1001	10YR 3/3 sandy silt - turf / topsoil
1002	7 5YR 4/4 clay silt - dog burial, fill of cut 1003
1003	cut - for dog burial
1004	7 5YR 4/4 clay silt - pet burial fill of cut 1005
1005	cut - for pet burial 1004
1006	10YR 4/6 clay silt - subsoil
<b>Trench 2</b>	
2000	machine dug trench
2001	10YR 3/3 silt with limestone fragments - hard-core / road surface with topsoil
2002	10YR 4/3 silt with brick / limestone rubble road make up
2003	10YR 3/1 sandy silt with brick / limestone rubble - road make up
2004	10YR 4/4 sandy clay - road surface directly on top of natural ( unexcavated )
2005	10YR 5/6 clay silt - natural
<b>Trench 3</b>	
3000	machine dug trench
3001	10YR 2/2 sandy silt with limestone rubble - topsoil with hard-core
3002	magnesium limestone geological strata / sandy clay - natural
<b>Trench 4</b>	
4000	maelune dug trench
4001	10YR 4/4 sandy silt - topsoil with small amounts of rubble
4002	flat limestone fragments - poss last road surface
4003	10YR 4/1 clay - leveling deposit
4004	10YR 5/4 sand with limestone fragments poss hard-core for foundation of road
4005	10YR 4/4 silty sand - fill of cut 4006
4006	cut - for wall 4005
4007	10YR 4/4 sand - poss hard-core for leveling and foundations of road
4008	10YR 4/3 clay silt with flat limestone fragments - poss earlier road surface
4009	10YR 4/3 clay silt with flat limestone fragments - poss earlier road surface
4010	mortar with coarse sand - bonding for wall 4005
4011	5YR 5/8 silty clay - natural
<b>Trench 5</b>	
5000	maelune dug trench
5001	10YR 5/6 fine silty sand - modern leveling deposit
5002	10YR 7/1 mortar with stones - leveling deposit
5003	cut - poss to accommodate modern brick wall 5018
5004	5YR 5/2 ashy grit - backfill of cut 5003
5005	10YR 6/6 mortar modern leveling deposit
5006	10YR 4/6 silty clay layer
5007	7 5YR 4/4 silty clay with stones- layer
5008	cut - u shaped linear cut poss dug as a foundation trench and later backfilled
5009	10YR 4/4 silty clay / gritty ash - fill of cut 1008
5010	masonry - poss part of early wall
5011	modern brick - present brick floor of barn
5012	7 5YR 2/6 Ashy grit - foundation layer for present brick floor 5011

5013	10YR 4/6 silty clay - modern leveling deposit
5014	10YR 8/4 mortar layer - leveling/floor deposit
5015	stone slabs - vertically placed slabs running East - West
5016	10YR 6/6 mortar layer - poss leveling deposit
5017	10YR 3/1 silty clay - thin burnt layer
5018	structure - brick wall ( modern ) running East - West along North edge of trench

## APPENDIX 2

### Finds Listing

Context	Description
3001	Total pottery 2 sherds 0 015kg ( 2 body sherds ) 1 clay pipe stem

## APPENDIX 3

### Archive Listing

#### Plans

1	Trench 1 - Plan Scale 1 20
2	Trench 2 - Plan Scale 1 20
3	Trench 3 - Plan Scale 1 20
4	Trench 4 - Plan Scale 1 20
5	Trench 5 - Plan Scale 1 20

#### Sections

1	Trench 1 - West facing section Scale 1 20
2	Trench 2 - West facing section Scale 1 20
3	Trench 3 - East facing section Scale 1 10
4	Trench 4 - East facing section Scale 1 20
5	Trench 5 - West facing section Scale 1 10
6	Trench 5 - East facing section Scale 1 10

## APPENDIX 4

### Photographic Archive

#### Colour Slide Film

1	Trench 3 - after excavation looking South
2	Trench 3 - after excavation looking South
3	Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking East showing West facing section
4	Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking East showing West facing section
5	Trench 1 - after excavation looking South
6	Trench 1 - after excavation looking South
7	Trench 2 - after excavation looking West
8	Trench 2 - after excavation looking West

#### Colour Print Film

1	Trench 3 - after excavation looking North
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- 2 Trench 3 - after excavation looking North
- 3 Trench 3 - after excavation looking North
- 4 Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking East showing West facing section
- 5 Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking East showing West facing section
- 6 Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking West showing East facing section
- 7 Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking West showing East facing section
- 8 Trench 1 - after excavation looking North
- 9 Trench 1 - after excavation looking North
- 10 Trench 4 - after excavation looking South
- 11 Trench 4 - after excavation looking South
- 12 Trench 4 - detail of wall looking West
- 13 Trench 4 - detail of wall looking West
- 14 Trench 5 - after excavation looking West
- 15 Trench 5 - after excavation looking West
- 16 Trench 5 - after excavation looking North - East
- 17 Trench 5 - after excavation looking North - East
- 18 Trench 2 - after excavation looking West
- 19 Trench 2 - after excavation looking West

**Monochrome Print Film**

- 1 Trench 3 - after excavation looking East
- 2 Trench 3 - after excavation looking East
- 3 Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking East showing West facing section
- 4 Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking East showing West facing section
- 5 Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking West showing East facing section
- 6 Trench 5 - East end after excavation looking West showing East facing section
- 7 Trench 1 - after excavation looking North
- 8 Trench 1 - after excavation looking North
- 9 Trench 4 - after excavation looking South
- 10 Trench 4 - after excavation looking South
- 11 Trench 4 - detail of wall looking West
- 12 Trench 4 - detail of wall looking West
- 13 Trench 5 - after excavation looking West
- 14 Trench 5 - after excavation looking West
- 15 Trench 5 - after excavation looking North - East
- 16 Trench 5 - after excavation looking North - East
- 17 Trench 2 - after excavation looking West
- 18 Trench 2 - after excavation looking West